



The Road through
**CZECHO-
SLOVAKIA**



DOROTHY GILES



GERMANY

DRESDEN

GERMANY
(BAVARIA)

AUSTRIA

PRAGUE

PLZEN

FRYVALDOV

Sternb

OLOMOUC

BRNO

LUHA

BRATISLAVA

VIENNA

R. Danube

R. Ohře

Karluv Týn

KUTNA HORA

TABOR

Nem. Brod

Pernštejn

Prachatice

C. BUDEJOVICE

C. Krumlov

KYJOV

Hodonin

Breclav

PIEŠTANY

R. Váh

Malý Dunaj

Gate
to
Prachatice

" WE PRAISE OLD TIMES,
BUT WE LIVE IN OUR OWN "

Trenčin Cast

Hope M^{rs} Kelley

353



Orava Podzam



POLAND

R. Vistula

R. Dunajec

Strba
NIZKE TATRY
Dobšina

STRICA
DÉTVÁ

Castle

BARDIOV

KEŽMAROK

LEVOČA

PREŠOV

KOŠICE

UZHOROD

MUKACEVO

R. TISZA

VOLOVEC

VOLOVE

CHUST

JASINA

HUNGARY

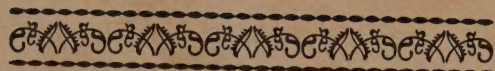
R. TISZA

ROUMANIA



Houses in the Carpathians near Volovec

CARPATHIANS



The Road Through
CZECHOSLOVAKIA



THE ROMANTIC CASTLE OF KARLSTEJN

The Road Through Czechoslovakia



By

Dorothy Giles

Author of

The Road Through Spain

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DEDICATION

THERE was One who opened to me the Gate of Romantic Memories.

And through it I saw Prague. Prague, at Christmas time, with the snow in the streets and the wind at the door; with the lights in King Wencelas' castle winking over the frozen Vltava, and the great Bridge, which has carried half the history of Europe, leaping over the river to the sombre Staré Město, still brooding upon the news from Constance.

And leading out of Prague, a road to the East.

Onion domes against a cloudless sky; the chanting of long, Slavic litanies; the tramp of high-booted pilgrims coming from the Carpathians to Velehrad; the scrape and wail of gypsy violins in the cafés along the Danube; the mad, wild mood of the czardas. . . .

And towering over green valley and golden plain, the great Tatras, snow-crowned and remote, which are the throne of the Lord of Time.

It has been long since the day that road was pointed out and the summer of my travelling it. The One who showed it me journeys now by another path. But the memory remains. And so this story of a vagabond summer is dedicated:

TO MY FATHER

PRAGUE,
September 1929

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PART I

THE KINGDOM OF WENCELAS

The Road Through Czechoslovakia

CHAPTER ONE

BY WAY OF BOHEMIA



CZECHOSLOVAKIA isn't a place," the Lily protested. "It's a mark on the bottom of the things you buy in the Ten Cent Store."

Four of us were walking in the Luxemburg gardens on a sultry Sunday afternoon in mid-July. A merciless sun had wilted the im-

pressionistic arrangement of pink lantanas, orange calendulas and heliotropes in the flower beds to a travesty of the bargain tables of *Le Printemps*. The little boys with the boats, the little girls with the hoops, the old ladies with the old gentlemen, the smart nurse maids with the bold gendarmes, even the weather-stained, horizon-blue heroes on guard before the palace gates were listless and dispirited.

In the morning the Artist and the Lily were going to the Tyrol and the Italian Lakes; K—— to the Pyrenees.

"Why not come with us?" the Artist had suggested to me. "Meran, you know. Yaduz, . . . the Brenner Pass. . . ."

"Como," said the Lily dreamily. "Porlezza. . . . Bellagio in moonlight. . . ."

"Roncesvalles," K—— offered stoutly in opposition. "Pamplona . . . Carcassonne. . . ."

I shook my head to all of these. "I am going to Czechoslovakia."

It was then the Lily offered her appraisal of Masaryk's achievement.

The Artist took out his little notebook. "This is the seventeenth of July. Shall we say October first? And the place—it must be accessible to all—how about Basel? There's an inn there, the Inn of the Three Kings. It's by way of being famous as the meeting place of three mediæval potentates. Let us meet there on the first of October in time for dinner. I may say that the inn's prices are commensurate with its ancient lineage. Also, they make certain ginger cake—The one who brings to that meeting the best story of the summer's adventures is the guest of the others. Is it agreed?"

"It is," we chorused.

Which explains, at least sufficiently for this chapter, why I was occupying a corner, back-to-the-window seat on the Nuremberg-Prague Express. My carriage mates were two elderly Bavarian ladies bound to one of the cheaper Bohemian "Bads," a supercilious, tightly-gloved, waxed-moustached young man whom I put down as Austrian, and a disheveled man and woman, who sat very close together, held hands very tightly, and whispered in strange Slavic syllables; their whole visible

property a cello which bulged in the luggage rack above their heads.

From my share of the window I watched the miles of Bavaria unroll behind us like a map of toyland; red-roofed toy villages set in clearings of the forest of Christmas trees; neat toy pastures with spotted cows grazing in them; very red and blue small boys and girls, watching flocks of very white geese. At a crossing, a woman in a blue apron popped out of the station box and waved a flag jerkily. Our engine gave a puffy whistle, and we went on.

The Bavarian forest mounts up and up to the crest of the mountain arc that encircles the blunt western end of Czechoslovakia. Then it begins to descend on the eastern slope and turns Bohemian on the way. German Erzgebirge turns Czechish *Krušné hory*, the Riesengebirge, the *Krkonoše*. The Black Forest becomes the *Česky Les* and the *Šumava*. And this forested wall, one thousand meters high at its highest peak, girdles the great golden plain of Bohemia on north and west and south; Bohemia, land of the Czechs, which has become the brains and the sinew of the new-born republic, sending its spirit eastward into the great Slav heart of Europe, through Moravia and Silesia and Slovakia to the deep forested valleys of the Carpathians. The ancient kingdom of good King Wencelas of the Christmas Carol lies within the forest's encircling arm.

My ticket read: Praha, via Cheb-Eger. The last was puzzling. When I pronounced the first half of it to the German conductor he stared at me disapprovingly. Then he and my carriage mates corrected me: "Eger."

Later, when the Czech immigration official came through the train demanding passports, I announced my

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destination firmly as Eger. The official gave me a withering glance and corrected me, "Cheb."

Thus, at the outset of my journey was I initiated into one of the ever-present problems of Central Europe. Centuries of Hapsburg dominion supplanted the ancient Czech and Slovak names with German and Magyar substitutes. Generations of citizens and travellers grew up, knowing only these names. Then, with the establishment of the Czechoslovak republic, the older Slavic names were brought back. The Czechs are hopeful as well as vigorously nationalistic. Apparently they believe that in time everyone will master the Slavic syllables which, first seen, are so appalling to those of us who expect a fair proportion of vowels to our consonants, and the Slavic accents which are part of the legacy left by Hus to his people. As the majority of foreign travellers use German as a means of communication, the wide divergence between the German and the Czech names is a source of frequent difficulty.

In some instances, as German Prague and Czech Praha; Pilsen and Plzeň; Olmütz and Olomouc; Brünn, Brno; the transition is easy to follow. But when German Eger becomes Czech Cheb, Taus turns into Domažlice, Budweis into České Budějovice, Pressburg into Bratislava, and Neusohl into Banská Bystrica, one begins to see reason in the arguments of the Esperantoists.

.

While the forest was still Bavarian we had picked up a tiny, swift-flowing river, the Ohře, racing out of the hills behind Baireuth, and tumbling down into Czechoslovakia to join the Elbe not far from the castle of Dux,

where Casanova ended his days in the library of Count Joseph Waldstein and used his master's pens for writing memoirs.

The river cut a passage for itself and us down the mountainside through the forest. Where it debouched into the plain, rose the ruins of an ancient fortress. Barbarossa set it there to guard the Hohenstaufen domain from the Slavs, while he crusaded. The centuries and the ebb and flow of empires have made it German and Czech by turns; have drawn about its walls a town — Cheb.

Few travellers stop in Cheb longer than is necessary for the cursory baggage examination. My porter either failed or refused to understand that I was the exception. He insisted on putting me in the waiting Prague express, and it took all my rusty German and more Czech than I ever mastered to convince him that I, an American *panička*, was not going to Karlovy Vary¹ or Mariánské Lázně.² At least, not that afternoon.

Even in the act of trundling his barrow with my luggage on it up the long, unshaded street that ties the customs station of Cheb with the town, he kept turning around and inquiring incredulously:

“The lady requires a hotel? It is a hotel the lady requires?”

Nor, having delivered me into the hands of the hall porter, was his mind at rest. From my window I saw him standing before the hotel door, lost in anxious contemplation.

A town on the old Bavarian pattern is Cheb. A little sister of Nuremberg, with its wide market square and fountain with the iron Roland on whose armored shoulder the pigeons preen before darting to bathe in the

¹ Carlsbad.

² Marienbad.

waters below his pointed iron-shod feet. Steep-roofed, high-shouldered houses keep the *namesti* in bounds. At their windows nothing stirs. Even the heavy-lidded peep-holes in their gables drowse. The enchanter's spell has fallen on them, too. At a stall beside the fountain, a rosy market woman nodded behind her crocks of wild raspberries and stalks of blue monkshood.

Narrow, twisted streets lead away to unknown adventures; one to the river's side and Barbarossa's fortress, which lifts a sinister black tower from the ruin of vaulted halls and the bower of fair ladies who waited for news from Acre and Jerusalem. There is a lovely, thirteenth century chapel rich with carvings; and the long banquetting hall where the Scotch and Irish officers of the garrison, who were pledged to kill Waldstein for the Austrian Emperor, entertained the Duke's Bohemian officers at dinner, while the Irish dragoons gathered outside to burst in with a dessert of swords.

In all the seventeenth century, that heyday of gentlemen adventurers when loyalty was offered in the market place and swords went to the highest bidder, Waldstein is the most spectacular figure. It was Schiller's need of an extra syllable to round out his rhyme that led him to change the name to Wallenstein, by which the great general is best known outside his native Bohemia. His career, from the Jesuit school in Olomouc to the Dukedom of Friedland, captain general of his own armies, owner of estates that rivalled those of the Hapsburgs, the master of a secret cabala, feared, courted, hated, reads like a Monte Cristo romance.

Waldstein committed the fatal mistake of serving a weak master too well. With the emperor's edict against him he withdrew to Cheb. Here he lay ill in the Burgo-



THERE'S A MEDIÆVAL FLAVOR ABOUT CHEB'S MARKET
PLACE



THE COURTYARD OF WALDSTEIN'S HOUSE — CHEB



VILLAGE HOUSES WITH CARVED GABLES

master's house on the town square, now the *městsky dum*. One may mount the worn stairs. Colonel Butler and Captain Devereux sprang up them, that night, swords in hand. They found the gouty duke on the great carved bed in the upper chamber. There they killed him. And Vienna rejoiced.

The *městsky dum* itself is a finely preserved specimen of twelfth century building. The heavy wooden galleries, on which the upper rooms open, are supported by finely carved beams. One sees the Duke here, pacing the courtyard, a melodramatic figure in his moose-skin cloak and hat with the trailing blood red feather; plotting — it may have been, as Ferdinand feared — union with the Swedes against his old master Austria; his reward to be the crown of Bohemia.

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I found the inn in Cheb very comfortable. There seemed to be a conspiracy in my favor between the pretty, flaxen-haired, blue-eyed Bohemian chambermaid who blushed to the name of Mariška, and the very small boy in very soiled, waiter's clothes who served dining-room and coffee house. Every waiter in Czechoslovakia is attended by one or more of these diminutive understudies. One wonders whence they come, these tiny servitors. I vow they are not children. They have none of the child's spontaneity; they are old, old. The one in the coffee room in Cheb was already flat of foot. His face was drawn into the pucker of anxious service. What enchantment has been laid on them? Do any of them ever escape the spell of dish cover and towel? Comes there for them a sabbath, when they spread their napkins on the air and sail away from the perpetual wet rings of

beer glasses, from coffee cups and baskets of rolls to a wild *walpurgnacht* of their own in some clearing of the forest?

Meanwhile, the spell holds. They take orders, wipe tables, serve food and drink; do all, in fact, that a house brownie must, while their melancholy master stares out of the window at the empty street and flicks his napkin at the buzzing flies — everything but reckon the bill. For that the *ober* must be summoned. With a stub of pencil held to lips, he catechizes you as to the enormities of your appetite. Have you had soup? meat? compote? beer? Sternly, "How many pieces of bread?" He adds the sum on the tablecloth, with the ten percent charge for service, and you pay accordingly.

What would happen if one were to cheat? If one forgot that last caraway-seeded, salt-besprinkled bread twist? Has the *ober* superhuman powers that would reveal to him your crime? And once revealed, would you, too, fall under the enchantment, and be doomed to carry bread and cheese and beer while the spell held? Can this be the explanation of the coffee room brownies? Are they those, who through lapse of memory or conscience, failed to render to the judge a true account of their gluttony?

Breakfast in Cheb brought coffee topped with whipped cream — "white coffee" — and poppy-seed rolls, and a pot of honey that tasted of linden blossoms. To the brownie's repeated anxious questionings I murmured, "No, No," for everything was indeed delicious, and I desired nothing more. Whereupon, he trudged away to return presently with a platter on which reposed three cold, hard-boiled eggs, and a very large red sausage.

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My plan, made en route from Paris, was to make a curve around southern Bohemia, following the forest's edge; later to move north to Tabor and so to Prague. True, I would miss the Spas of Karlovy Vary and Mariánské Lázně. But these haunts of health and fashion seekers held no charms for me. It was the forest I wanted. That, and Sunday in Domažlice, with the Chods coming in from the forest heights to make holiday, and the town square ablaze with the scarlet of their tribal dress.

Half an hour with the Railway Guide informed me that to reach Domažlice for the Sunday morning gathering I must go by afternoon train to Plzeň, sleep there, and start before five next morning.

The way led across a rolling plain of wheat fields, golden now for the scythe. The great arm of a reaping machine cut a broad swath through the ripe grain for a troop of laughing Ruths, blue skirted, red kerchiefed. Wheat . . . wheat . . . wheat. Patches of crimson clover and a million bees droning over the flower heads . . . long stripes of sugar beets. . . . Then the wheat again . . . then the clover . . . green and gold . . . green and gold. . . .

A road cut the fields. It ran glaring white to a gathering of houses about a church. The square whitewashed tower was capped by an onion dome. The first outpost of the Slavs.

∴ ∴ ∴

Plzeň is famed for more than its beer. There are its sausages which are trundled in a barrow along the station platform, and are awaited by epicurean travellers who

lean out of the carriage windows and consume the local food and drink with avidity while the express waits.

But besides its sausages, its beer, cooling in gargantuan casks in the five miles of vaults that are hewn in the solid rock below the town, its mines of brown coal and the great machine works which make it the second city in the republic, Plzeň is known by all Czechs to have the best marionette theatre in all Bohemia.

No slight honor this, in a land where the puppeteer's art has never been demeaned to harlequinade. The Czech genius for the grotesque, which enriches their folklore with a thousand fantastic imageries, and, under the spur of modern industry, makes them excel in the manufacture of toys, trinkets and gewgaws, has given them an art of *polichinelle* unequalled by any other people. You may see, carefully treasured in Prague's museum, the stage and properties of Mates Kopecky, a famous puppet master of the eighteenth century. Weekly marionette performances are given in a special theatre in the capital's library. Scarcely a town of pretensions but has its own *loutkové divadlo*, and scarcely a bookseller who does not trade in puppets as well as print. Rows of flaxen-haired Libušas, Přemysls in silver armor, knights, gnomes, burgomasters, and the flying *baba*, the witch who figures in all Slavic folklore, dangle in the book-shop windows.

As in Sicily, that other kingdom of Punchinello, the plays are all of the saga of Roland and Oliver, so to the *loutkové divadlos* of Bohemia their own drama woven from the tales of those half-mythical heroes who figure in the history of Cosmas of Prague; Krok, the chief, and his three daughters — Kasi, mistress of herbs; Teta, who first taught the Czechs to placate the *rusalky*, fairies; and

Libuša the Wise, who sat on the Vyšehrad and judged the tribes.

The play I saw that night in Plzeň was part of the Libuša saga. It concerned itself with an Amazonian lady, Vlasta, who after Libuša's death, tried to entrap the widowed Přemysl. Vlasta and her maiden warriors, led by the flying *baba*, waged war on Modol, a friend of Přemysl and captured his castle. There was a moment of high tension when the chieftainess mounted the turret and blew a victorious blast on her trumpet. But her triumph was short-lived. Přemysl, who prudently kept himself out of her way, despatched the knight Prostirad to besiege the castle. The play ended with a fanfare of trumpets as Prostirad returned, bearing Vlasta's head, satisfactorily bloody, on his shield.

The audience of stolid Plzeňers and their wives applauded gravely, then filed out for nightcap refreshment at the nearest coffee house.

There was not a hint of raggle-taggle-gypsy in the crowd. They belie their name, these Bohemians. They are sober, phlegmatic, not given to hot enthusiasms. No trait of theirs won for their nation the reputation of exuberant gaiety, of *laissez faire*. Rather the miserliness of the king of France whose daughter, coming to be queen of Bohemia, brought no other dowry than the right of free entry into France for all Bohemians. The Czechs were a home-keeping people, too occupied with affairs east of the Rhine for foreign travel. So it happened that none of them claimed the privilege which was seized on by every strolling player, mountebank and gypsy. These, writing themselves down Bohemians, entered into France free of charge.

Even so are national reputations made.

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Today, industry has seemingly marked the Czechs for its own. They are the go-getters of Europe. Progress, prosperity, nationalism, these are the new gods of the Vyšehrad. The treaties of Cleveland and Pittsburgh carried to the new republic more than a political significance.

But the psychological reverse grows proverbial. The American is the greatest idealist in history; Gallic thrift proclaims the gourmet; British phlegm cradles the seed of far-flung adventure. So to the Czech his . . . *loutkové divadlo*.

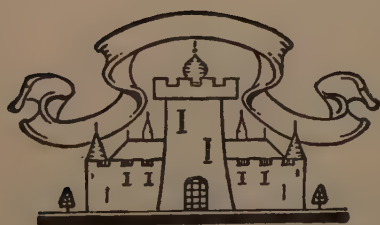
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Night invested Plzeň's streets with a romance they know not by day. Out of the dimness the bulky outlines of breweries and warehouses loomed like mediæval fortresses, fit guardians for the old palaces on the cathedral square with their Italian façades and transalpine glories of window and balcony. Rightful guardians, too, since the wealth that brought the cunning workmen from Milan and Florence was founded in those honest vats and laid away in the great tuns in the cool vaulted cellars.

One grows over-familiar with relics of dead and gone prosperity. Here in Plzeň there has been no decline, no lichen decay into a mere sight for tourists. Plzeň of the mediæval trade caravans, argosies of the Tachers and other great merchant princes of Bavaria and Saxony, bringing silks and spices from the East by way of the Danube and the Golden Path, has kept step with the march of trade through the centuries. In its factories and breweries and machine shops, it has achieved its long appointed destiny.

Coming late into my hotel that night, I learned the reason for the great hooks which seem a feature of Bo-

hemian inns, jutting into the corridor beside the door of each bed chamber. By day, the door keys hang from them with refreshing assumption of honesty. But their real occasion comes with bedtime. As I tiptoed down the hall, fearful of creaking boards, not only the boots set out by each door proclaimed the sex of the room's occupant, but from each hook dangled a pair of trousers, awaiting the porter's brush.





CHAPTER TWO

THE ENCHANTED FOREST



MAGIC place, the Šumava. The home of trolls and pixies and those grotesque sprites of wind and fire and water — the *jezeniny*, that whisk through a thousand Bohemian fairy tales — it is the haunt of sprites blest and unblest, not all of these having been put into captivity by

Svaty Prokop, that ancient bishop of Bohemia, whose statue, leading a pair of demons in leash, stands reassuringly over the door of many a parish church on the forest's fringe.

If any there be who think that these ancient, capricious, disturbing forces no longer exist, that the *rusalky* whom Princess Teta taught the Czechish folk to placate, are become mere bogeys to frighten naughty children, let him have a care that he himself does not fall into their clutches and forfeit his sight even at such a time as he deems himself the wisest.

It was not yet four o'clock when the Boots knocked me awake. He went with me to the station through the

unearthly half light that precedes the true dawn. Even at that hour, the train was filled with country folk. These had evidently been making a night of it in town, to judge from the promptitude with which they fell asleep on the third class benches amid baskets, bulging linen bundles, even live geese. The approved manner of transporting these fowl would seem to be to bind each one securely in swaddlings of linen cloth which pinion wings and legs, and leave the long necks with the bright eyes and vicious yellow bills to protrude dangerously.

There was also a group of bare-kneed men and women with rucksacks and staffs, bound for a holiday on the trails of the Šumava.

Beyond Plzeň's modern suburbs with their flat-faced, shutterless houses — modern Czech architecture leans to the packing-case type — the rolling plain appeared again with the morning mists curling from it; the floating grey wisps were ghostly reminders of the long veils of the Hussite women which by Žižka's orders they spread on this same plain to entangle the feet of German soldiery. At Sudomeř, here on the wheat lands, was Žižka's first victory. Legend tells that, as for Joshua the sun stayed in its course, so for Jan of the Chalice it sank a full hour before its appointed time, and, in the sudden darkness, he drove the emperor's forces from the field.

Much of the Thirty Years War was waged on the plains of western and southern Bohemia. Plzeň, stronghold of the Catholic imperial party, battled Protestant Tabor. The two hundred years from the death of Hus in 1415 to the defeat of the poor Winter King and his English queen, at White Mountain, are filled with sanguinary campaigns of Czechs against Czechs and both against Austrians and Hungarians.

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Day came. We stopped at numberless village stations, mere platforms set down in the everlasting sweep of wheat and clover fields. But each adorned with its boxes of bright flowers as all the railroad stations in the Republic are. The third class compartments emptied, filled, emptied again. The peasants who left the train knelt on the platform to pull off their boots, stuffed these into their bundles, settled the bundles on their backs, then trudged away, comfortably barefoot, through the dust.

At last, lying dark on the horizon, the curve of the forest. And rising against the wood two strong white towers and the red roofs of a town — Domažlice of the Chods.

Domažlice means the Town-of-the-Stay-at-Homes. Just as Chod means One-Who-Walks. On the heights that overlook Bavaria and Bohemia, the Chod clansmen guarded Wencelas' kingdom from their hereditary Teuton foes. Their flaming beacons, visible, it is said, as far as Plzeň and Karluv Tyn, where the sceptre and crown of Wencelas were kept, gave warning of invasions. In return for their service as sentinels, a ninth century privilege — the yellowed parchment is still to be seen in the town museum — relieved the Chods of military service. A not inconsiderable reward, considering Bohemia's bellicose history. Their tribal banner, with the head of a snarling watchdog, still flutters on great days from the battlements of Chodsky Hrad on the town's edge.

One must walk the straggling dusty road that leads from the railway to the town gate with its deep arch and the arms of the city above it — arms in which an angel adds his supernatural strength to the resistance of two fortified towers. Homely little shops with pots of red geraniums in their windows nestle against the tower's

battle-scarred stones. They were open, that Sunday morning, and doing a thriving trade in round, sugar-coated *kolačes* and painted gingerbread, and the hard little green pears that young Czechs and old seem to devour with a national immunity to stomach aches.

Within the gate, one is at once in the great *namesti*, bordered on three sides by deep arcades upheld by massive-like, strict-minded burgesses leaning forward, propped on stout elbows, to watch the life of the market place. Gothic doorways, groined and keyed with chipped armorial bearings, now hidden under many layers of republican whitewash, lead from the arcaded street to dwellings and shops.

On a Sunday morning, when the town's pulse beats its quickest, the whole effect is strangely oriental; the cool depths of the arcades, where the sellers of cheeses, hot sausages, fruits, painted gingerbread, poppy seed and bundles of dried herbs spread their wares; the great sun-splashed square, ablaze with lengths of scarlet calico and rows of scarlet stockings on the booths of the travelling merchants; the strolling groups in their distinctive Chod dress — the men in fawn-colored, knee-length trousers, with fine embroidered blue waistcoats over their full-sleeved, white linen shirts — the women scarlet-skirted, scarlet-stockinged, in tight-sleeved, scarlet bodices, their black kerchiefs tied at the nape of the neck and one embroidered end flung proudly over the left breast.

And keeping watch and ward over all, the two tall, round, fortified towers; that of the church on the right, the castle's on the left.

And all this glory of scarlet, all this sizzling of sausages and chiming of church bells, all this peacocking and love-

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making and gossiping under the arches, ends as irrevocably as Cinderella's ball at the stroke of the clock.

An hour after Mass is over, the square is deserted. The shutters are put up at the shop windows, in the braziers the charcoal is reduced to a heap of ashes. Shriven and blessed, and with the week's provender securely tied in the bundles on their backs, the Chods have gone back to their hills. Loitering under the arcades are only a few old men, townsmen all, smoking their ruminative, long-stemmed pipes with the painted porcelain bowls and dangling green tassels.

It is so in all the country towns of Slavdom. You must catch them at the flood. On Sundays and on the days of weekly and the more bustling monthly markets, they are ablaze with costume, their streets quick with life. At all other times, they are strangely dispirited. No crowd comes running to gather about the casual stranger, as is the lighter way of Latin towns. The traveller comes and goes, and shrugs his shoulders over the waning picturesqueness of Central Europe. If one would know the true life of these people, one must follow the weekly markets, just as in rural England one runs away from the early-closing days. And Sundays become days of excursions and adventures.

Domažlice was the home of the Czech novelist Božena Němcová. Her novel, "The Grandmother," is one of the classics of Bohemian literature.

An hour's walk out of Domažlice brings you to the height of Ujezd where stands the statue of the Chod hero, Jan Sladky. More usually he is called simply "Kožina," after the freehold that he farmed. When the Hapsburgs revoked the ancient rights of the Chods, Kožina led the clansmen in revolt. The uprising was summarily put

down, and the leader was hanged in Plzeň's market place. His story forms the theme of Jirasek's novel "*Pschlavci*" (The Dogheaded) from which is drawn the opera which is so popular with all Czech audiences. The black embroidery which ornaments the collars of the Chod costume to this day is a mark of perpetual mourning for their hero.

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The tower gate guards the entering in of Domažlice from the plain. From the opposite end of the *namesti* — one has recourse perforce to the Czech name, since so few of these market places are square; the majority being like Domažlice's, a tapering oblong — a sign post put up by the Czech Tourist Club pointed me into the forest. The market place dwindles into a street with a row of pollarded sycamores shading the rosy, old house gables; the street in turn dwindles into a country road shaded inadequately with rows of distorted plum trees. The road becomes a path.

The forest came forward to meet it, and took me into its dark embrace.

It was early when I started, fortified with a map and guide of this part of the Šumava. The Czech Tourist Club publishes these little booklets, one for each section of the republic that is walkers' ground. They give all the trails, the distances, the locations of refuges where food and emergency accommodations may be had, and the significance of the painted blazes that mark the paths.

My little map, bought in Domažlice from the *knihkupecs* — the literary tradition which decrees that all book-sellers shall be eccentrics would seem to have evolved the Czech name for the profession — showed innumer-

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able paths leading across the Pass into Bavaria. How much Bohemian history has poured through that cleft between the Český Les and the Šumava! Chod beacons flaming on the heights again and again to warn Prague of the ever dreaded German advance. When Žižka won his celebrated "Victory" of Domažlice, the defile was packed with the retreat of the German Catholic forces. Pell-mell, foot and horses, master and man together, they thronged the narrow way. The Pope's legate, Henry of Winchester, the son of an English king with the blood of Agincourt in his veins, tore the shamed battle standard from the bearers and hurled it beneath his horse's hoofs in disgust.

My way led not over the Pass but eastward, along the inner edge of the Šumava which curves from Domažlice in a southeasterly direction to Český Krumlov, a distance of some fifty-six English miles. Two peaks rear their heads from the forested granite ridge; Javor on the Bavarian side, and Bohemian Boubín, standing four thousand feet above Prachatice.

I had no thought to go so far, though the Guide held out alluring suggestions for walking trips of four days and more, with opportunities to stay overnight in the klostermann huts maintained by the Tourist Club; only to Klatovy, a town described in high terms both for its "architectural memorabilia" and the comfort of its Inn of the White Rose. Klatovy lies some twenty miles east of Domažlice. By sending my luggage ahead by train, and making an early start I might expect to reach the *Bila Ruže* by nightfall.

Every forest is a world of its own, a complete and separate universe into which the things of the open have no right of entry. And all are different. These vast tracts

of the Šumava in which millions of trees have seeded, sprung up, flourished and crashed to their fall to become in turn fodder for new green generations, has been protected for more than a thousand years. It is not wild at all, the Šumava. It has none of the lusty vigor, the exuberant, pushing growth of the Maine and Michigan woods; it lacks the lonely exaltation of the high timber lands of our American Northwest. It is stately and ordered. It marshals its serried files of spruce and pine as its overlords marshalled their armies. It knows no revolt, no sudden temperamental moods of dells and ravines, or open barren spaces. The brooks that rush through it to become rivers to water Bohemia — brooks well stocked with trout, but woe to the tourist who would poach their waters — tumble into picturesque waterfalls, or steal away into still black tarns.

No, the Šumava is incredibly, incurably romantic. It is a picture book forest, a setting for Tennysonian Lady Clares and Lord Ronalds; a terrain of Andrew Lang adventures.

It was wonderfully still, that day, as I walked there. No birds sang; not a rustle betrayed the presence of the summer wind. The thick carpet of dried needles was delightfully springy under foot. The path's edge was outlined in pale grey mosses, and here and there buttons of tiny orange and red mushrooms.

The Guide spoke warningly of the danger of wandering from the paths; it threatened peat bogs and bottomless lakes. Being written no doubt for literal, sober-minded tourists intent on mileage, it made no mention of the *jezeniny* who are known, by those wise in forest lore, to lie in wait for foolish travellers to rob them of their eyes. It marked the lakes and springs, but gave

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not a single paragraph to the water sprite who dwells therein. The Šumava water sprite has a fondness for appearing to maidens in the guise of a monster frog. He croaks his wooing and when he prevails, leads the enchanted damsel down under the waters to his palace. There he shuts up her soul in one of the apothecary jars that line his shelves and returns to the water's edge to await another bride.

It was close on noon, and I figured that I had walked more than half my journey, when the quick barking of a dog gave warning of habitation. Around a turn of the path I came on a clearing — and a cottage. It might have been one of those rustic barometers with Fair Weather in a blue apron, and Storm in a yellow bodice, popping in and out of its door by turns.

On a bench beside the door sat a forester in his proud green livery with the chamois brush in his hat.

The dog's bark was not fierce but welcoming, and the forester rose and beckoned me to a seat on the bench. His daughter came from the cottage and the two questioned me, turn and turn about, in German, who I was, whence I had come, and whither I was bound. The forester was a lean grizzled veteran of the forest; the girl, tall and straight and lovely in her blue skirt and white linen blouse with the short full sleeves. Her head was unbound by any kerchief and the long virginal braid fell across her shoulder. As she leaned against the dark frame of the cottage door, she was like a shaft of sunlight that had found its way to the forest's heart.

In response to their questions how I, a stranger, hoped to find my way in the Šumava, I showed them the map and guide. The forester handled them scornfully.

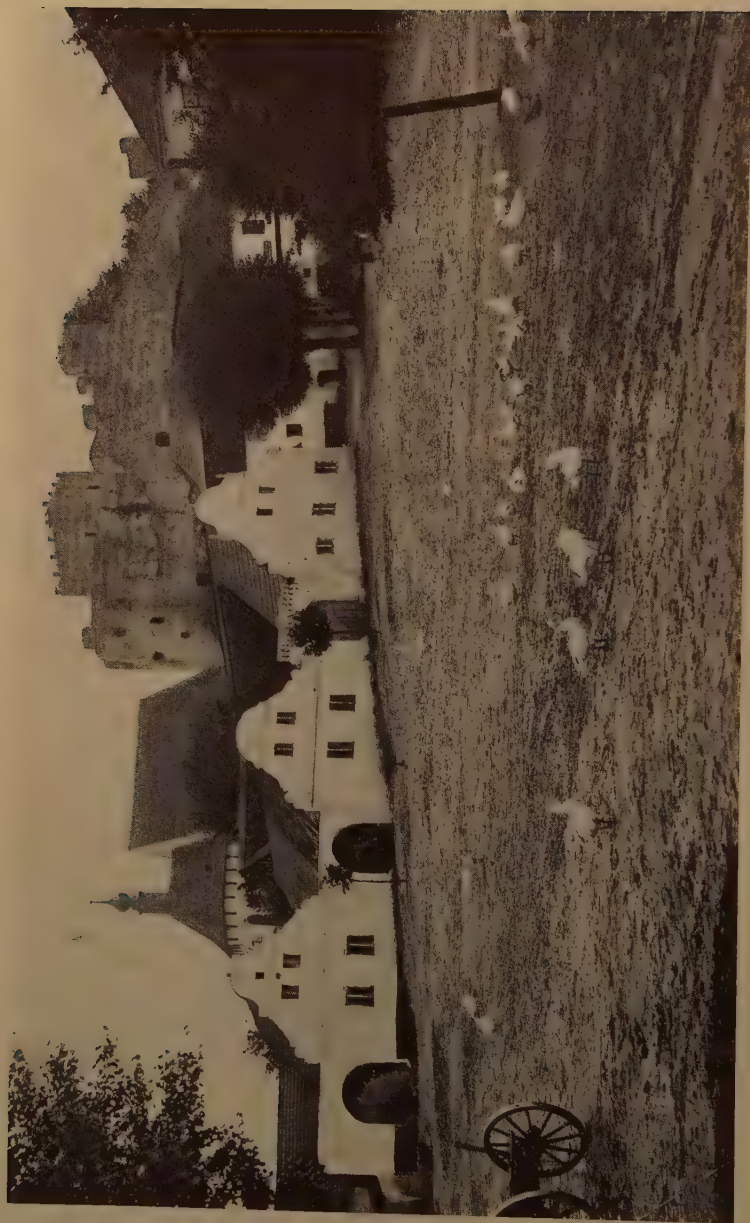
“There is more in the Šumava than is set down here,”



CHOD WOMEN COMING FROM CHURCH —
DOMAŽLICE



THE ŠUMAVA IS THE HOME OF THE "JEZENINY"



RABI CASTLE ON THE EDGE OF THE ENCHANTED FOREST

he said. "I have lived here all my life; my father and my grandfather were huntsmen for the Prince Swartzenberg. But even I do not know all that the forest holds. Even they did not know. Perhaps, you have heard the story of Helen's castle?"

I shook my head.

"It happened a long time ago. Our Bohemian King Henry had a daughter named Helen. She was very beautiful. The king wanted to marry her to the King of Hungary. But Helen loved a young count, Graf von Altenburg. He was not royal, you see, but he was very clever. While the king was away at the wars, the Count came here to the forest. He built a castle. It was the most wonderful castle in the world, finer even than Karluv Tyn. You have seen Karluv Tyn?"

"Not yet," I said.

"Ah, well, this castle was still stronger and more beautiful. Finer than the great house of the Swartzenbergs in Česky Krumlov. The Count fitted it with furniture all of gold and jewels. He stocked the pantries with food, and the cellars with wine. Then, that no one should know where the castle stood, he killed all the workmen who had done the building. When all was ready he brought the Princess here.

"They were very happy in the forest castle, just those two together. They hunted the stag and they fished for trout in the streams. And at night they went back into the castle and drew up the drawbridge and slept in safety.

"Then, one night, a wayfarer knocked at the castle gate. He was an old man so they let him in. They did not know that it was really King Henry come hunting his daughter. They even asked him about the king.

"'He is dead,' said the old man, craftily.

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"And Helen clapped her hands and cried for gladness.

"The old man who was her father and the king said nothing; only listened.

"In the morning he went away. But he came back. Oh yes, soon. With a great army. He besieged the castle and broke down the wall, and set fire to the towers. Helen and the Count fell on their knees and cried to him to spare them. At last he did. He took them away to Prague, and it is said Helen never laughed again. But the castle was destroyed, and no man to this day can tell you where it stood.

"Now, there is something not in your book," he finished.

"It is a fairy tale," his daughter said.

Her words, or perhaps the presence of her ripe loveliness stirred some resentment in him. "She wants to leave the forest," he said harshly. "She is not happy here."

"I go to be married."

"Married," the forester snorted. "To a cutter of pearl buttons. A man who comes and goes, and eats and lies down when a whistle blows. To a townsman who lives in a cottage for which he must pay rent. And then he has not it all to himself!"

The girl's lip curled proudly, but she made no reply.

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I came into Klatovy on the path of the sunset. The last kilometer lay across fields of carnations. The growing of these flowers is Klatovy's chief industry. There were women and girls at work in the rows of silver-leaved plants. They straightened as I passed and regarded me gravely.

The glory in the west touched the little town's two towers — the Black Tower of the lords of Rožmberk, long ago owners of the Šumava, and the White Tower of Panny Marie, by which Klatovy is saved now and through eternity.

The Guide, whatever the forester may have thought of it, had not erred about Klatovy. The town has a fine stone-paved square with a fountain and rows of fourteenth century houses that lift towering gables as though hopeful of attaining the grandeur of the two towers, and the *Bila Ruže*.

From Klatovy, forest trails lead over the ridge of the Šumava to Zeležna Ruda, the frontier town, and thence down to St. Florian's Abbey on the Danube near Linz, an establishment so rich that the bankers of Genoa were content to accept it as security for the three million crowns they loaned Maria Theresa for her war against Frederick the Great. Florian is a much sought patron in the wooden villages of the Bohemian forest. One passes many a cottage with a niche over the door wherein stands a statue of the saint with his two brimming water pails. And over his head in its Roman helmet that has furnished Czech fire companies with a model headgear, the verse:

House and home trust I to Florian's name;
If he protect it not, his be the shame.

A railroad skirts the forest running from Domažlice across southern Bohemia to join a network of other lines at Brno in Moravia. There is also a complexity of local motor buses linking village and village. But by no amount of juggling of train and bus schedules could I work out a way of leaving Klatovy in the early after-

noon, stopping off at Susice to visit the ruined fortress of Rabi, and continuing to Pisek in the evening. The *Bila Ruže's* proprietor, the porter, the waiter and his imp, and two or three habitués of the inn's combination coffee house and billiard saloon, which serves the town as a men's club, agreed unanimously that I must depart from Klatovy by automobile.

Equally unanimous was the verdict that the automobile should be that of Antonin Šramek. The imp was despatched in one direction, the porter girded his green baize apron tighter about his loins and set forth in another, to find Antonin and his car.

Produced, Antonin proved to be a worn-looking little man whose age might have been anywhere between thirty and fifty. He seemed to wear habitually a puzzled expression. His eyes, deepset under overhanging brows, were intent on some secret search. They did not look out, but in. He accepted me, my luggage and destination without question, except to ask whether I was prepared to pay the charge of two and a half crowns a kilometer for his solitary return drive to Klatovy while I went on by train. Reassured as to this, he sighed deeply, cranked his engine and with deep bows from the group at the *Bila Ruže's* door, we started.

The road, white and dusty, stretched across the fields to the southeast. The July sun blazed on the golden wheat stubble where old women gleaned. Here and there in the patches of clover the mowers were whetting their scythes, preparatory to cutting the green growth and piling it to dry on the dead spruce trees set up in each field. To the left of us, as far as the eye could reach, stretched the alternating narrow green and gold and brown stripes that are the result of division and redivision

of the peasants' land holdings. On our right, beyond narrow fields, lay the forest.

I thought with longing of its cool dark paths; the invigorating fragrance of its breath. I spoke of this to Antonin.

He nodded, understandingly. He was himself forest born, he informed me. He had come from the old town of Vimperk where the press still turns that printed battle Bibles for the Hussites in 1484.

"And are there *jezeniny* in the forest there?" I asked lightly.

There were many who thought so, he said. Forest dwellers were apt to be superstitious. He had known men who refused to go into the Šumava without a sprig of bramble in their hats. The bramble, they avowed, would ward off the most dangerous *jezeniny*. Others, more pious, trusted to the stump of a church candle carried in the pocket. But these, I must understand, were all ignorant persons, without education. They accepted without question all that the old people and the priests told them. He, Antonin Šramek, was neither Catholic nor Protestant. A liberal, a free thinker ——

The plain dipped suddenly, and we sped through a whitewashed, deep-thatched village set between green grass walls. The women were washing linen in the trickle of muddy water that ran down the middle of the straggling street; flocks of geese fled squawking from before our wheels.

The road lifted, mounted the plain again. Before us stretched the forest, and against the forest, on a barren shoulder of hill rose a shattered silhouette of grey bastions and towers. Antonin pointed his finger, "Rabi."

We left the car in the village at the base of the hill

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where the castellan gave us the key and pointed to his *embonpoint* and the mug of beer awaiting his consumption as excuse for not accompanying us. The drive, stone-paved under the grass of centuries of disuse, leads steeply to the gate. Rugged and lonely, the old fortress rears its shaggy head above the village's small concerns.

Samo, chief of the Slavs, built the first citadel here in the seventh century, when he battled Dagobert, king of the Franks, and forced him to recognize the Šumava as the boundary between the two empires. The present castle, all that remains of it, dates from the thirteenth century.

Today, only broken stones testify to the height of its towers, the impregnability of its walls. Two moats, the inner one tumbled into the rock of the hill site, girdle the fortress. Within these, gates and courtyards, great subterranean dungeons and treasure chambers, a chapel with delicate window looking to the east, and the ruins of the Knights Hall tell the story of the past. Here, no doubt, the Minnesingers struck their harps and sang the ballads of the Niebelungen. Here came fast-riding couriers from Crécy, bringing news of their King John's death, and the Black Prince of England, taking for his shield the motto and device that had been Bohemia's. Here, relaxed after supper, wandering friars, well-lined abbots, troubadours and captains of mercenaries recounted the gossip of Carinthia, Württemberg, Burgundy and Provence. Here men slapped their sides over the latest escapade of the Tyrol's Ugly Duchess; muttered their suspicions of the black magic practised by the Jews; toasted, hands on sword hilts, the Maid of Orleans.

Rabi was a Rožmberk fortress when Žiška led his troops to besiege it. An arrow from the parapet cost the

Hussite leader his left eye. "Old rhinoceros Žiška," to quote Carlyle's phrase, was a son of the Šumava, born in the enchanted forest.

"He was the greatest general," said Antonin Šramek suddenly. "Greater than Napoleon."

It was then I thought to ask him about the War.

"Yes," he said simply. "For seven years I fought. Four times I was wounded. When the War came, the Mayor stood up in the square. He said we Bohemians were of Austria, and we must defend our fatherland against the Italians. We went away south to fight. In the mountains. It was hard there in the snows. The mountains are not like our mountains. The forests, too, are different. My company was with the Hungarians. They are not like us, the Hungarians. But they were good fellows in their way. When things were very bad, Kaiser Karl came to visit us. He said that we were all Austrians and soon the War would be over, and we would go back to our homes and all would be well.

"Then there was peace. An officer came from Prague. He said that we Czechs were not Austrians any more. He said we must defend our fatherland against the Hungarians. They sent us away to Slovakia, to the Carpathians, to fight the Hungarians. For three years there I fought the men who had been my comrades. It is hard to understand. . . ."

The sun had dropped behind a shoulder of the Šumava. The shadow of the forest fell on us.

I looked at Antonin Šramek. He had taken off his hat and he stood there twirling it in his hand. The old cloud of bewilderment had settled again on his face. His eyes continued that secret inner search.

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Is it only in the enchanted forest that the *jezeniny* lie in wait to rob men of their sight? Only in the fairy tales that false voices lure and betray?

I looked at Antonin Šramek's hat. No, there was no sprig of saving thorn.



CHAPTER THREE

ALONG THE GOLDEN PATH



EVERY town needs a river to wrap it close. It needs the contrast of the passing flood to give the significance of permanency to man-made walls and towers. Cheb has its Ohře; Prague flings proud bridges across the Vltava; the stones of Passau and Ling murmur songs of the Danube.

Pisek dabbles her skirts in the waters of the Otava and still talks, after three centuries, of the gold these same waters washed into her hands, and which, some day, they may spread on her threshold again. For who shall measure the ways of Time?

Viewed from a point across the river, Pisek rises alert and watchful; grey battlemented town walls of Rožmberk building; a rough old watch-dog of a castle; leaning carnelian-colored gables of stout burghers; smooth grey onion domes, and tallest of them all, the tower of its thirteenth century decanal church with the sentinel's walk about the top.

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Below the castle a bridge takes the Otava in seven-arched strides. "Prague's bridge is longer," say the proud people of Pisek, "but ours is older. The oldest stone bridge in Bohemia." And they suggest that King Charles, who sought to make Prague the finest city of the Empire and so built the great bridge over the Vltava, took the *most* of Pisek for his model. "He merely made it longer," they say. "And he set statues on the abutments. But he could not make it better."

As one leans over the coping of that really beautiful small bridge, and watches the muddy Otava swirling about the stones and studies Pisek's silhouette—how beautifully bridge and walls and domes and tower compose—one feels no surprise that the Emperor and all his architects could not have improved on the design.

Of all the great books that remain to be written, there is one which shall tell the story of the great trade roads of the world. A romantic sonorous tale, marching with caravans and pack trains, alive with rumors of dynasties falling and new cities being born, bustling with inns, blazing with silks and velvets from bursting bales, fragrant with spices and musk and ambergris and the precious attar from Persian gardens.

To say that all roads lead to Rome is but one age's way of saying that every age has its great trade artery to which all the other roads diverge, from which they draw life.

When the crusades flung wide the gates of the East, the Way of Incense stretched from southern Arabia across the desert to Byzantium. Wealth of Sheba and Solomon pouring into the Golden Horn. The Danube pressed a hungry mouth to that rich fount; she drank



THE BRIDGE OF PISEK ON THE "GOLDEN
PATH"



KLATOVY'S "BLACK TOWER" AND INN OF
THE WHITE ROSE

greedily, and northern and western and central Europe were fed. Up the valley of the Danube flowed the warm life blood of the East, and all along the way peoples newly emerging from the Gothic dark reached out hungrily, tapped the stream, and drew from it their tomorrows.

Long before that time, the western Slavs had tramped a path across the Šumava to Passau in quest of the salt of which Bohemia has none. Now they widened that path; they felled trees and laid them into the beginnings of a road that the pack trains and creaking wagons might be diverted from the Danube stream, and come northward to Prague and Plzeň, to Breslau and Cracow.

So the ancient Salt Way became the Golden Path. The towns it threaded — Český Krumlov, Budějovice, Prachatice, Pisek — fattened on the trade flowing through their gates.

Pisek stands at the turn of the Golden Path. From Pisek, one arm reaches northward to Tabor and Prague; the other, stretching over the bridge, touches Plzeň, and so into northern Bavaria.

But the prudent Czechish folk, true to Teta's tradition, took no chances with the Šumava. Prokop had not set all the *rusalky* and *jezeniny* flying. By ancient law it was decreed that each town along the Golden Path should send a watchman to its church tower every hour from dark till dawn, that, standing there, he should blow four trumpet blasts, one to each point of the compass, that by these calls travellers on the Path could know the true location of the towns, and be saved from the enchantments of the forest.

You may hear it still in Pisek, that warning night call, every hour from ten at night until four in the morning. Four times the bugle sounds from the church tower,

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then an hour's silence, then again the four reassuring calls. And the good folk of Pisek, wearied by their day's labor of making fezzes for the Turks whom their forefathers served with swords, turn on their pillows, secure in the knowledge that whether king or president rules on the Hradčany, the good old ways have not been changed.

There are other things in Pisek still unchanged. The thirteenth century church is set more fortunately than many another of its time, at the town's edge so that it has an open space about it and bits of the old ramparts framing the dean's garden. It shows a richly carved west portal with bits of Romanesque sculpture set into the flat façade. On the north side a deep porch in the renaissance style opens into the transept.

Many of the houses on the market square still boast their ancient distinguishing signs. You may address a letter to the "House of the Serpent," or "the Three Crowns," or "the Blackamoor," and be sure that the postman will bring it to its destination as readily as though you gave street and number.

One house with a gilded Spanish galleon over the gable strikes a foreign note. A relic no doubt of the governorship of Don Martin de Huerta whom the Hapsburgs set to subdue rebellious Hussite Pisek. Don Martin's arms show a pair of scissors — he was a tailor in Prague before the Austrians brevetted him. He snipped and slashed and trimmed the sturdy old Bohemian town to a tragic semblance of the Spanish fashion approved by Vienna and Madrid.

The once royal castle, where Don Martin held sway, I had seen from the river side. Once within the town, it was not to be found. I thought I had a fair idea of its

location, its relation to bridge and square and church, but I walked the length of the high street twice over and could catch no glimpse of the grim, battle-scarred walls.

I stood on the curb, puzzled by so complete a disappearance, when the door of a tobacconist's shop opened and a stout elderly gentleman came out.

I was a stranger? I was looking for something?

For the castle, I explained.

With a courtly gesture that belied the shabbiness of his frock coat, his worn elastic-sided shoes, and the sorry green tinge of the hat he carried gallantly in his hand, he escorted me down the street to the door of the uninteresting town hall. Through it we passed into a courtyard. Across this, hidden by wings of offices and the yards of a brewery, stands the relic of the fortress.

Only the great vaulted upper hall with its painted frescoes and the roses, red and white, of the Rožmberks, remains intact. Deep windows look down on the bridge and the river flowing fast under the castle walls to join the Vltava. There and in the adjoining rooms the town has gathered relics of its past.

That chance encounter—but was it chance?—opened a hospitable door in Pisek. I went to drink afternoon coffee with Pane J—and his wife. They lived in one of the stout old houses built into the town ramparts above the curve of the river. It had a narrow garden shaded by a lime tree where we sat and drank our coffee and ate the rich chocolate *dorte*, which is the symbol of Bohemian festivity, and heard the chit-chat of the laundresses over the wall at the stream's edge.

The eager, pleasantly excited voices of my host and hostess ran on in two languages—German and French.

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It was Pani J—— who spoke French as though the tongue of Paris brought an added gaiety to the occasion.

Pani J—— was a plump, vivacious woman; younger, she might have stepped from a Rubens canvas. But middle age, and something else, had tinged her cheeks' roses with lavender, had cast a dimness over her sparkle. Though her thin aristocratic nose still lifted haughtily, and her grey hair swept proudly from her high forehead, there was a shadow as of fear in her eyes, and her lips when they did not smile, had a way of trembling.

She herself was Pisek born, she told me. Her husband came from Pardubice in eastern Bohemia. He had been a captain in an Austrian cavalry regiment. Ah, the tragedy of those elastic-sided shoes to feet that have stepped proudly in polished russet and jangling spurs! When his regiment was stationed at Pisek, they had met, fallen in love and married.

"But we did not live here," Pani J—— ran on. "We had an *apartement* in Vienna." Memories of the Ringstrasse, of gala nights at the opera, of the carriage parade in the park of Schonbrunn, of the fête of the Emperor's birthday, and scandals, that were yet permissible because they happened within the sacred pages of the *Almanach de Gotha*, sparkled in her eyes.

"That was before the War."

In the second winter of the hostilities, she had come back to Pisek. Her father had died, and the house and a tiny income were hers. "It was easier for me here than in Vienna." So she had waited for the War to be over and her husband to come home, and life to begin for them again.

And at last he had come; to putter about the narrow, walled garden, to take his daily walk to the tobacconist's,

to read and smoke under the lime tree, to talk about the past — growing each year shabbier and poorer — and prouder. But not, it was that one read in the tremulous movement of her lips, not to *live*.

"I have become a student," said Pane J——. "Once I thought to make history for I was bred a soldier. Now I read it. There is nothing else for me to do." He said it quite simply.

"You see, for so many years we have been Austrians. It did not occur to us to separate the two loyalties. For us," he motioned to his wife, "Bohemia and Austria were one."

"For the younger people it is different. The change is easier for them to make. Don't misunderstand me. Masaryk is a great man. He made good terms with the Peace Conference at Paris. Republics," he rose, clicked his heels together and bowed to me, "of the American pattern, *gnädige frau*, are the vogue in Europe today. At that, we in Bohemia are better off than they are in Austria where all is very uncertain and the socialists are in power."

His wife tossed her head. "Better that now I must pay my Anička ten crowns a week more than I used to pay her before there was this republic? And for it she does less and is not so respectful."

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It called for no small amount of diplomacy to persuade these new made friends to accompany me on a day's motoring along the Golden Path. Not till I mentioned Hluboká, the castle of the Swartzenbergs, did Pani J—— weaken and assent.

The Golden Path winds out of Pisek southward to

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the forest. Where it breasts the hill beyond the town we passed a wayside chapel, a dusty, littered shrine filled with withered garlands and memorial wreaths. It marks the site of a victory over the French in the War of the Austrian Succession. Even more deadly than the bullets of Maria Theresa's soldiers was the biting cold of the Bohemian winter. There is a phrase still heard in French barracks from Strasburg to the Soudan: "the bivouac of Pisek," which is *poilu* slang for a very rotten deal.

From that rise of ground we looked across the fields that were broken by great shallow ponds, where carp are raised for the markets of Vienna and Prague. All these ponds once belonged to the lords of Rožmberk who had the privilege of supplying fish to the sovereign.

Protivin with its Swartzenberg castle and tall church tower, where the night watchman calls the hours, overlooks its ponds. Vodnau, lying like a Dutch village on the dike between two sheets of quiet water, was mirrored exquisitely, gables, domes and towers.

In September the water is drained, the large fish taken out and shipped to the cities where they are kept in the fishmongers' tanks and fattened cunningly against the holiday season. A fine carp, not Wencelas goose, being the historic Christmas dinner of the Czechs.

"But it must have a sauce," said Pane J——. "The sauce is half the dish." And with epicurean delight he gave me a recipe famous in his family, and compounded of grated gingerbread, blood and onions.

All this is Hus and Žižka land. Scarcely one of these village pulpits but Master Jan preached from it; not a mile of road but Žižka's armored wagons thundered over it. The stolid country folk we passed, trudging



PRACHATICE, WHERE HUS LEARNED HIS
LETTERS



CASTLE ZVIKOV ON THE ROAD TO TABOR



THE GARDEN OF THE HUS BIRTHPLACE



TABOR'S STRONG GATE

under lanes of plum trees, gleaning the wheat stubble, hoeing the everlasting rows of sugar beets, were the great-grandchildren of those who shouldered their threshing flails and marched out to battle singing Žižka's hymn, "Come, all ye warriors of our God."

At the foot of the long hill of Peter and Paul lay Prachatice, a ruddy-hued huddle against the encircling dark Šumava. Where the noon sun struck edges of roofs and gables, their old weathered stones glowed with lichens. The Golden Path runs in at a double fortified gate. The remains of a stout oaken portcullis still hang over the low arch. Above a faded fresco shows Vilem Z. Rožmberka on his white charger. Underneath, are his five roses — white and red, and the motto:

We Praise Old Times But We Live in Our Own.

That line might stand as the motto of all the Czechs.

The Rožmberks entrenched themselves securely in Prachatice. The salt house, where they stored the precious sacks from Passau, still stands at the head of the town square, a sturdy relic of fourteenth century thrift. But the glory of the town is its old dwellings, their overhanging upper stories adorned with sagraffito paintings, stirring scenes of legendary battles, with benign Joves and Minervas supervising the fray, all in a rich brown and black decor. It was an art that appealed mightily to the Bohemian taste. In nearly every old town of Bohemia one finds houses so decorated, for which the cunning workmen were brought from Florence and Milan. But Prachatice leads them all.

On the façade of the new Town Hall one reads the pictorial story of the Golden Path. Here go the creaking,

heavily laden carts, the coaches, the horsemen, the litter of a fine lady, all moving north to make Emperor Rudolf's Prague the chief city of the Holy Roman Empire.

The Church of St. James, *svaty Jakuba*, rears its single lanterned tower from an angle of the square. St. Adalbert founded it. Its clean Gothic framework with the rare star vaulting, eleventh century the experts say, was overlaid with rococo painted plaster and gilt in the counter-reformation which sought to eradicate all Hussite memories. But the fine old aristocrat shows through the bedizening. A small turret in the angle of the apse is pointed out as the place where forty citizens sought refuge when Prachatice suffered siege in the Hussite Wars. The besiegers fired the church and the turret became a fiery furnace from which no escape offered. A loophole high up in the wall is filled with a bent and twisted iron lattice, distorted, so the story goes, by the clutching of pitiful hands. And the story of that tower is typical of many tales one hears in Bohemia. The facts are lost in clouds of religious controversy; and whether the besiegers were Hussites and the victims Catholics, or vice versa, depends on the tongue of the teller.

Hus and Žižka went to school in Prachatice. The Writers' School still stands in the shadow of Sv. Jakuba.

On the wall a fresco depicts the learned gentlemen, "writers of Prachatice," from whom no doubt Master John learned his letters. They were Cyrillac letters in his day. It may have been memories of difficult hours and stiff birchings that prompted him, grown up and a doctor of philology and master of the King's University, to invent the simplified spelling of the Czech language,

giving the Roman letters newly devised accents to carry the soft *ssh ssh* of the Slavonic tongue.

History states that young Hus sang in St. James' choir in payment for his tuition. His food he carried with him, coming each day over the fields from Husinec. Once, at Prachatice's gate, the excise man stopped him, demanding duty for the lords of Rožmberk on the loaf the boy carried under his arm. Whereupon Jan sat him down and ate his loaf, crust and crumb, and entered replete and free to school.

It was in a baker's window on the *namesti* that I saw a loaf of bread baked in the shape of a lamb, just such a figure of innocence as adorned the banners of the Knights Templar. And, for such is the way of legend, that loaf has involved itself forever in my mind with the Hus story. It is just another such loaf that I see young Jan munching under the exciseman's nose, and swallowing defiantly at Vilem z Rožmberka on his white horse over the forbidden gate.

Fifteen minutes driving past the geranium-hung villas of Markétiny Lázně, one of Bohemia's innumerable small spas, and around the forested slope of Mt. Libin, on whose summit Hus preached to the multitudes, brought us to Budějovice. The town is a popular summer resort. At Horice, in the Šumava nearby, Passion Plays are given each Sunday during the summer months in a theatre that seats four thousand persons.

Časke Budějovice is also the motorists' gate into Austria. A century ago a horse-drawn railway, the grandmother of all the railroads of Europe, was built over the ridge from here to Linz, a distance of but twelve German miles.

Today Budějovice bustles with industry — does not the Budweiser beer rival Plzeň's? — and in a land that accords education the respect the Czechs give it, its lead pencils must be steadily in demand. But none of these occupations have marred the gravity of its square, the fine sturdy lines of the arcaded houses with their solemn doorways and hints of hidden courtyards.

We lunched at the Inn of the Sun, famous for the light above its door which has glowed for generations of travellers. And of course there was *knedlicky* — dumpling — without which no Czech meal seems to be complete. Before its solid dark mysteries the puffy white variety of New England seems mere fluff and nonsense. And who shall say how much of the obdurateness in the Czech national character is traceable to this article of the national diet?

Later we drove out along the Vltava's green river meadows to the castle of Hluboka.

Its name, in German *Frauenberg*, "the Castle of the Woman," commemorates the blood-stained love of its founder Zavis of Falkenstein and Queen Kunhuta, the widow of King Ottokar. Of this thirteenth century Hluboka nothing remains but an ivy-grown ruin in the park. Its stones have gone to build the magnificence of the Swartzenberg princes. Its story, wild and passionate like so many chapters of Bohemian history, was sung by the troubadours in all the courts along the Danube.

Zavis of Falkenstein, Lord of Hluboka, was stepfather and counsellor to the young Wencelas II, and the implacable enemy of the Hapsburg Count Rudolf, who had a greedy eye on Bohemia. The same Swabian who

figured in the prayer of the Bishop of Basel: "O God, sit fast, or Rudolf will have Thy throne next."

Zavis requested the king to act as godfather to his son, and this the king agreed to do if Zavis would come to Prague and escort him to Hluboka for the ceremony. When the christening party arrived before the castle walls, Wencelas and Rudolf were in battle array and Zavis a chained captive.

The king sent an ultimatum to Vitek, Zavis's brother, who commanded the castle in its lord's absence; let Vitek surrender Hluboka and Zavis's life would be spared. Vitek's reply — "I have pledged my honor to my brother to defend his castle for his son" — was the warrant. Zavis was led out into the river meadow before his own towers and there beheaded.

Since that day, Hluboka has been held, first by the Rožmberks, then by the Austrian Princes of Swartzenberg. Early in Queen Victoria's reign, one of the latter was entertained at Windsor. He returned to build on the site of an ancient Rožmberk castle a replica of the palace on the Thames. Hluboka is still used as a country house. Some member of the family was in residence that day so we might not visit the living rooms — to Pani J——'s ill-concealed regret. We contented ourselves with walking about the terraces with their beds of flaming calceolarias and the beautiful wooded park that slopes down to the quiet river. The smooth lawns, the magnificent beeches and elms, the softly running river, all these make a picture that might be a corner of Surrey.

The English taste seems to have been hereditary in the Swartzenberg line. An earlier Prince commissioned the English animal painter, Hamilton, to decorate the walls of his hunting lodge in the park.

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There are the stags and the does, and the wild boars, which the Prince kept in specially constructed dens on the shore of a little lake. Three hundred boars was the average for a single hunt. Beaters drove the animals from their pits, and the Prince's guests, seated on the dike, shot them as they took to the water. An old law of the chase decrees that the animals' heads must not be injured.

That the scene might have the full Viennese flavor, the ladies sat in a balcony and the Prince's private orchestra played the waltzes of Johann Strauss.

The story of these Swartzenbergs, who were heirs of the Rožmberks, completes the story of feudalism. As we drove through the forest to Český Krumlov, I kept thinking of the tale of Puss-in-boots, in which as the king and his son-in-law drive through the land, the cat keeps saying: "All that you see belongs to my lord and master the prince, your majesty's son-in-law."

These lords of the Šumava governed, for life and death, fifty thousand souls. The old fighting Rožmberks kept a standing army of twenty thousand men. Emperors took their daughters to wife; their sons counselled kings.

And all this might, this supreme independence, was vested in their dark-timbered, red-roofed castle town of Český Krumlov which guards the beginnings of the Vltava that waters Prague.

The castle sits brooding like a raven on a spur of rock that juts from the forest. The building of the castle covered the lifetime of three princely houses. The part known as the New Palace is called by that name in the archives of 1500.

The fortress sends its tentacles down the cliff, tower by tower, palace and courtyard and gallery. It drives its dungeons deep into the mountain's heart. In one of those noisome cells, Henry of Rožmberk disciplined Wencelas IV, King of Bohemia and emperor of Germany. Standing in that horrible, airless chamber with its dank walls that are hewn into the mountain, one shudders at the power of the "Gentlemen of the Rose." Almost one is sorry for Wencelas, though history writes him down as a depraved and brutal creature who went about with a pack of bloodhounds at his heels and whose favored companion was the executioner.

If kings and emperors had no power to subdue these Rožmberks, no more did they quail before the Estates. It was to another Lord Henry, a century later, that three magistrates came from Prague with legal documents all correct and the demand that he surrender certain holdings doubtfully obtained. He met their demands with a smile — and forced the magistrates to eat their words, literally — parchment, ink and dangling seals. Then he hunted them from his premises with dogs.

A little town has fastened itself about the fortress. Its streets mount in narrow, twisted stairways between the leaning, timbered dwellings. Gentle faces of women look out through the tiny windows many of which are still set with the old glass roundels that show the pontil mark in the centre. Wars and rumors of wars have passed over Krumlov and touched it but little.

The castle has no need of town. Its own bakery and brewery, its theatre for the lords, and coffee house for the guardsmen, make it a world unto itself.

"And its ghost?" I asked. "Surely it does not lack that."

Pani J—— leaped to the castle's defence. "But of course. The White Lady, *Brichta z Rožmberka*. She visits all the Rožmberk castles all over Bohemia."

The White Lady of the Rožmberks is one of Bohemia's national traditions. Countess Brichta, Bertha, was married to a prince of Liechtenstein. To draw it mildly, the marriage was not happy. The Prince, though a Knight of the Golden Fleece, did not scruple to beat his wife; but she endured all with noble fortitude until her husband's death cheated her of her martyrdom. In her white widow's weeds, she returned to act as chatelaine for her brother, the then reigning lord of Rožmberk. Before her marriage Brichta had been gay and laughter loving; now she moved about the castle like a nun. She dedicated herself to the service of the poor, for whom she used to concoct a special sweet porridge, called in the chronicles *dulce mus*.

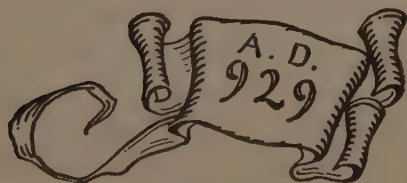
It is her spirit which haunts the castles of the dead and gone Rožmberks. The Swartzenbergs inherited her with the lands. She wanders through the corridors to see that the houses are kept in order and the poor are not neglected. In her memory, the custom of the *dulce mus* was continued for generations, as many as nine thousand poor being fed in the kitchens of Jindřichuv on a Maundy Thursday. And the omen of her apparition has passed to the Rožmberk successors so that when the rumor goes about, "*Brichta z Rožmberk khodi*" (Bertha of Rožmberka is wandering) it is taken to mean the death of the head of the family, or some national disaster. (Ah! Brichta z Rožmberka, did you walk that early summer of 1914 when the two emperors of Hapsburg and Hohenzollern were meeting in secret at Konopište castle on the edge of the Rožmberk lands?)

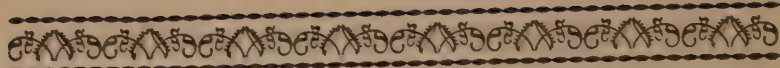
When they were considering their action as regarded a late unpleasant episode in Sarajevo?)

The sight of so much feudal magnificence had stirred old regrets in Pani J——. On the drive home to Pisek she kept shaking her head, murmuring vague deprecatory remarks about republics and modern ways. Pane J—— sat and smoked in silence.

But I thought: they were stout stuff, those ancient Gentlemen of the Rose who kept the Golden Path. In them spoke the old free spirit of the Czechs. They had no stupid scorn of honest trade. On their arms the carp was displayed as proudly as the roses. This adventure now going forward on the Hradčany, wresting a people from the dustheap of broken nations. Ah! there is in that something to quicken the Rožmberk blood! There is in that something that is their own, more than in hunting boars to the strains of the "Blue Danube."

I thought: I must get on to Prague.





CHAPTER FOUR

TABOR



YOU cannot be long in Bohemia without growing familiar with her three Johns — Jan of the Goose, whom we have seen munching his loaf at Prachatice's gate; Jan of the Chalice, "that great behemoth of a war captain" — the phrase is Carlyle's; and Jan of the Five Stars whose pietistic statue in a cassock and lace-edged surplice, with the crucifix in his hands and five stars gleaming about his head; he is to be seen in every town, on every bridge, and wherever the trickle of a stream gives the devout an excuse for calling upon his protection.

All these, as mere historical figures of long ago controversies, would have only a passing interest for the traveller in modern Czechoslovakia, were it not that circumstances attendant on the destiny of nations have woven them into the woof of Bohemian thought. All have political, as well as religious significance, and in the national renaissance the three have emerged as symbols.

As the Spaniard is the most inherently religious of all the Latin peoples, the Czech is, among the Slavs, the

one most acutely concerned with things eternal — and this is irrespective of the creed he professes.

The Spaniard brings to his quest for reality a mysticism beyond parallel. The Czech makes his search for truth with his intellect. It is this insistence on intellectual conviction, theology against pietism, dogma before mysticism, which marks the cultural progress of this people from the earliest times. It was this, no less than the demand for political independence — meaning freedom from German interference — that awoke the Reformation. It was this that gave every Czech farmer and farmer's wife in the fifteenth century a knowledge of the Bible "to put an Italian priest to shame," to quote Pope Pius II, who wrote a history of Bohemia under the pseudonym Aenaeas Sylvius.

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The three Johns belong to southern Bohemia. Nepomuc, the birthplace accredited to Jan of the Stars, lies out on the bleached plain south of Plzeň. The ruins of Trocnov, the birthplace of Žiška, may be seen from the railroad as it nears Budějovice. Legend avers that Jan of the Chalice was born in no house, but under a giant oak tree in the Šumava, while the thunder crashed and lightning cleaved the enchanted forest. The legend makers have not forgotten that Perun, the war god of the pagan Slavs, was throned under an oak, and the thunder bolts were in his hand.

Husinec means "the village of the Huses," — that is the significance of the constantly recurring *ec* and *ice* as final syllables of Slavic place names, these being affixed to family names much as we add *ville* or *town*. It lies just off the Golden Path near Prachatice.

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July sixth, the birthday of the great reformer, is a national holiday. Then the straggling white village becomes a mecca for the patriotic Sokols who maintain the Hus cottage as a museum. You may stand in the low-ceiled room, where Hus was born, and look out of its one tiny window at the village street which has changed little, if at all, in the six passing centuries. There small, flaxen-haired Jans and Aničkas tumble about in the dust, and the fat white geese waddle solemnly down to the village ditch.

One wonders why not the goose, instead of the two-tailed, royal Bohemian lion on the arms of the new Republic? The national bird is omnipresent, either alive and feathered, or swimming in its own oily gravy. The flocks in Husinec are numerous enough to have given the name to the village, even without the greatest "Hus" of all. What was Master Jan's own bitter pun on his name? "They will burn the goose. But after me there comes a swan. Him they will not burn."

There is a trim garden behind the cottage and a bust of Hus rises, serene and faintly smiling, from a blaze of marigolds and zinnias, gentle reminders of the flames that lighted Constance, and benches that are, as an inscription in English tells, the gift of Protestant congregations in the United States.

A building at the end of the garden, once the threshing shed where young Jan swung his flail, has been made into a meeting-house of the Czech Brethren, one of the Protestant sects that continue the Hus tradition.

As I walked in the garden, my ears were assailed by the blows of a hammer and the shrill buzzing of a saw. In the long bare meeting-room, with its painted benches and Bible texts, a carpenter was at work in a midst of

shavings. He wore the striped apron and traditional square cap of his trade. I had never seen a carpenter really in costume before, except in Tenniel's illustrations of the Walrus's lachrymose friend.

But this carpenter shed no bitter tears. He was round and rosy and his face beamed over his work. He informed me in very good German, and with obvious pride, that renovations were being made in the building for the coming of a resident Brother and his American bride.

I asked him if he, too, were one of the Brethren.

He nodded emphatically.

"And do you live here?"

He said, "No, but at Bavorov, another village not far off."

"But," he continued earnestly, "it was not there that the Light came to me. In my youth I was one of those who had no use for religion — not of any kind. 'O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways and hardened our heart from thy fear?' Isaiah, the sixty-third chapter, the seventeenth verse."

He brought out the quotation with an air of triumph, beaming at me and nodding and holding his saw before him as it might have been a sword and he a knight making his vows.

"In those days," he continued, "there was one of the Brethren who used to go about the countryside. He would go into the fields and on the roads and in the shops in the towns, wherever men were at work. He used to talk to them about God. He talked to me, many times. He was a good man and I liked him, but what he said did not interest me. I used to say, 'Fine words, fine words. That is what it all amounts to . . . talk.

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Good enough on the tongue, but beyond that it does not go.'

"Then the War came. I was one of those to fight at Přemysl. The Russians gave us a bad time there. One day, this same Brother appeared in our camp. The War had taken him too, you see. But though he was a soldier like the rest of us, he did very much as he used to do before the War took him. He still talked about God, and he prayed. Some of the men listened to him and some asked him questions, and some just laughed. I did not laugh, but I stood off to one side and I thought as I had thought before, 'Yes, yes, that is fine talk. But for me to believe, there must be more than words. If once I saw that religion was also *das leben*, then I would believe.'

"And now, see. When the Russians took Přemysl I was one of the prisoners. They sent us away into Russia, some to this camp, some to that one. In the camp where I came, there was this Brother I tell you about. He had been captured, too.

"That prison camp was worse than being at the front. We were hungry and cold and dirty and sick. The Russian guards were often cruel. Many, many prisoners died. They had no care at all. And we thought they were better off dead. It is in places like that prison camp that the truth that is in a man — the worst and the best — comes out.

"Well, this man I tell you of. He was there, no different than he had been at Přemysl, no different than as I knew him about here before the war. He still talked about God; he still prayed. Always he was gentle and full of hope. He did not hate anybody, not even the Russians. And I watched him for two years, for that

is the time we were in prison. And in those years I saw that this religion he had was also *das leben*, and so I believed, 'Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead,' James, second chapter, seventeenth verse."

He regarded me gravely for a moment. Then with a new excess of devotion he began his sawing again.

Going back to Pisek in the jerky little way train I thought about the American girl who was coming to live in John Hus's garden, and of the carpenter who had seen the Light. One does not question a confession such as his. One accepts it and the simplicity with which it is given, humble and grateful for this small portion of Reality which Fate has put into one's hand.

Most of all I thought about the Czech Brother whose faith the horrors of a Russian prison could not quench. It seemed as though the spirit of John the Goose was still marching on.

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It was hard to leave Pisek. There was a friendliness in its streets, and at night I found myself waking, listening for the watchman's bugle call floating thin and clear over the sleeping roofs.

The J——s came to the station to see me off. Pani J—— brought a bouquet of pink phloxes whose warm homely fragrance is wafted over the walls of Pisek's hidden gardens. Pane J—— bowed ceremoniously and clicked his heels and kissed my hand with the courtliness of the *ancien régime*.

East of Pisek the country is all rolling downs through which the Vltava cuts a deep gorge. At a point where the banks rise steep and sheer, two hundred feet above the water, the railroad leaps across the chasm on a bridge

so narrow that you see nothing between you and the abyss. You catch your breath to scream but, before the breath comes, you are on the other side on the broad rolling high downs once more.

The ruin of Zvikov castle, another stronghold of the lords of Rožmberk, stands at the confluence of the Otava and the Vltava. There are stout gates and bastions, halls and palaces of the Rožmberks and Swartzenbergs, and, rising from the centre of the ruin, still strong and black and unbroken, a tower said to have been built by the early inhabitants of Bohemia, the Marcomanni, of whom great Caesar spoke with respect.

In the season of high water the logs from the Šumava are floated down the stream, lashed into rude triangular rafts. Each raft is poled through the river reaches by two lumbermen. When the forest is going down, one can, with luck, hail a raft from the shore and bargain for passage down stream past Orlik, another great house of the Swartzenbergs, rising proud and high and remote on its cliff over the Vltava.

But no rafts were going down, that morning, for the river was low after a long drought. And beside, I was bound for Tabor, the city of Jan of the Chalice.

The Lužnice, a tributary of the Vltava, by swinging into a curve that is nearly a full circle, has isolated an oblong hill from the plain. On three sides the hill rises steeply from the water. On the fourth the genius of Žiška raised impregnable palisades. This hill, fortified by nature, was used by the early Hussites for their religious gatherings. Here they assembled to receive the communion in two kinds for the right to which Hus and



SQUARE AND TOWN HALL, TABOR



THE OUTDOOR COMMUNION TABLE OF THE TABORITES

thousands of their brethren had died. When the controversy overflowed the church and the university, when it became, as well, a Bohemia's battle against the encroachments of the Germans who pressed her on all sides; when German Catholic miners of Kutna Hora threw Bohemian Protestants into the shafts and called the death trap in derision Tabor, and the Hussites nailed their Catholic prisoners in tarred beer barrels and rolled these into a bonfire round which they sang the war psalms of King David, when all Europe rang with the controversy, and the possession of fortified strongholds was a decisive matter, Žiška built his town on the hill of Tabor.

If you enter Tabor by the badly paved, drab and altogether discouraging street which leads away from the railroad station to the square, you lose more than half its thrill. You need to follow the walk that outlines the hill outside the old town walls. On your right, the ramparts have broken into houses and bits of garden. Below you the river runs through willows and the land rises gently from the other bank in meadows where the housewives of Tabor spread their linen to bleach. At last you come to a causeway spanning the ravine and bringing the road from the south up to the *Bechyňská brana*.

This fine fortified castle gate Žiška built in 1420. The warm hue of the stones, the ruddy tiles of the high pitched roof, the severe iron work in the windows, and uplifted beside it, like a drawn sword, the tall, white tower — the mere designing of all this would seem a life achievement sufficient for many men. Jan of the Chalice tossed it off as a part of the day's work.

Within the gate, narrow winding streets lead away in

all directions, to make the entry of an armed force more difficult. I lost my way in the maze and wandered in and out of cobblestoned lanes that called themselves streets with sonorous titles if one were brave enough to pronounce them. The little low houses huddled shoulder to shoulder. Many, too small for a staircase within, have grown a winding stairway, like a dark and gnarled vine, along the outer wall. On the window sills pots of cacti alternated with squat jars of crimson rose haws ripening into the rich conserve so highly prized by Bohemian housewives. These were about their morning business with brooms and buckets of water. A girl, washing linen in a wooden trough set out in the street and blocking the narrow way completely, pointed me over it and around three corners to the market square.

The Taborites, prospering in the fifteenth century, labored to make their town rival the beauty of Kutna Hora which was the stronghold of the Catholic Imperialists. The church, Catholic now, as Tabor is in the main, is a fine specimen of fifteenth century building set forth with proudly mounting end gables. The old houses show magnificent façades ornamented with stone scroll work. One has a jutting balcony, from which Žižka used to preach. A bronze bust of the One-Eyed stands in the square, and relics of him — his shirt of mail, his sword, his maps and a model of his armored wagons — are in the museum in the Town Hall. It is easy to see how the battle wagon, which was Žižka's contribution to the art of war, has developed into the modern tank.

Before the door of the Town Hall stand two tables of rough stone. The casual eye might pass them over as mere benches for idlers, but no Taborite lolls there. They are the tables of the Lord. Here the consecrated

bread and wine were administered to the multitudes who gathered for worship in the open *namesti*.

Somehow the sight of those two simple stone tables moved me more than all the great shrines of Christendom. They spoke clearer than tongues the rugged faith which gave birth to Tabor.

The city lived under communal rule. There was no distinction between master and servant. All goods were held in common. In the museum you may still see the iron-bound chest which stood in the square into which the wealth of the community was poured.

Of course, like all experiments in communism, it failed. The Protestant party was split and weakened by sects and cross sects long before Bohemia's final defeat at White Mountain. When the blow fell and the Protestant exodus began, many Taborites went first to Germany, then to America. The first Czech to settle in America was Augustin Herrman, the son of a Hussite clergyman. He came to Bohemian Manor, Cecil County, Maryland, in 1633.

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Long after memories of Žižka were forbidden, and even as late as a generation ago, the men of Tabor used to carve their walking sticks with heads of "The One-Eyed." Perhaps there was something reassuring in the feel of those blunt features hidden within one's palm.

What an interesting object for a collector's quest!

As one wanders about Tabor's streets, one sees again and again the Utraquist emblem of the chalice, appearing in carvings of stone and wood, just as it appeared on Žižka's battle standards.

And, so potent is history, this same emblem marked

the uniform of the legionnaires, the thousands of Czech troops who, conscripted by Austria, refused to fight for the Entente, rebelled and deserted into Russia and Switzerland and Italy to reappear in companies on every one of the Allied fronts, fighting for the hope of an independent Bohemia.

The story of the Czech legions furnishes the most dramatic, as well as the most romantic, element in the history of the Great War. I well remember standing one drizzly day on the steps of the Public Library in New York and watching a file of troops in sorry-looking uniforms pass down Fifth Avenue. We were used to the tramp of marching feet in those days; our eyes were filled with khaki and horizon blue. But these uniforms were olive drab and on each one was marked in gilt a chalice. Who were they? Somebody in the crowd said they were Czechs. Who were the Czechs? Nobody knew with any degree of surety. "One of those new nations that the War had brought to light."

Slowly the news passed down the line of spectators, keeping step with those marching feet, that these men were Bohemians; they had rebelled against their Austrian commanders; they had escaped into Russia; they had crossed the steppes; crossed Siberia; crossed the Pacific; crossed the American continent. Between them and their goal, the French front, intervened now only the Atlantic. A Bohemian patriot, an ex-college professor named Masaryk, had his headquarters in Paris and was directing this revolution in favor of the Allies.

And the chalice on their shoulders? Its once religious significance was lost. It was the badge of their defiance against Austria, their determination for freedom.

The story of the Czech legions is a continuation, after three centuries, of the story of Jan Žižka of the Chalice.

Under the July noonday sun, the square shone like a hot stone plate. Only a line of trees, planted by the church wall, threw a patch of shade. On a wooden bench below them sat five old women.

They sat very still without any of the little fumbblings and mumblings of the very old. Their black skirts were drawn about them, black kerchiefs folded their heads close. There they perched like five old shabby rooks.

Presently from the church came a sixth old woman. She wore no kerchief but a black bonnet that quivered with jet. She stepped with authority. She passed along the row and five hands were thrust out. Into each crooked palm she dropped a coin. The fingers closed on them, the toothless jaws mumbled, the benefactress passed on and the five relapsed again into their silent waiting.

I had left my luggage at the station for I intended taking the evening express to Prague. I had no qualms for its safety, and evidently the guardian of the *šatna* had had experience with tourists of careless habits. When he handed me the three receipts he frowned and waggled a finger under my nose.

"*Pozor*," he said sternly.

As *Pozor* may be interpreted DANGER, WARNING, TAKE CARE, I decided that the rule "No ticket, no baggage" would be enforced.

There was an afternoon train up to the capital that I could have taken, but I wanted to wait for sunset over Jordan pond at the base of Tabor's hill, and Žižka's city rising above it with the dying sun in its face.

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To get away from the ceaseless click of billiard balls in the hotel's *kavarna*, as well as from the heat and listlessness that pervaded the town, I walked out through the Bechyne gate and along the road. Presently a footpath lured me into the woods that skirt the opposite shore of the Lužnice. Through the trees I looked out on the smooth green lawns of the Jesuit college. A narrow footbridge spanned the stream, and there beside it, at the meeting of wood and meadow, stood a statue of Bohemia's third John. . . . Jan of the Five Stars, *Svatý Jan z Nepomuka*.

John of Nepomuc, the story goes, was attached to the University in Prague and confessor to Queen Sophia, who was the wife of that Wencelas whom Henry of Rožmberk disciplined—the same Sophia who was Hus's friend and supporter, and whom Žiška served as captain of the royal guard.

So closely are the histories of the three Johns interwoven.

King Wencelas, already under a cloud for his offences spiritual and political, accused the queen of treachery. He called on the court chaplain to reveal what she had spoken under the seal of the confessional. This John of Nepomuc steadfastly refused to do. Whereupon Wencelas ordered that he be flung from the Bridge of Prague into the Vltava.

Where the body sank, so goes the legend, five stars appeared above the surface of the water, revealing to any who doubted that Wencelas had put to death a saint. The body was recovered and given burial in the Cathedral on the Hradčany in a shrine so precious in its weight of more than a ton of silver that the Praguers were kept busy hiding it from the Swedes, the Prussians

and the French, as these conquering hosts swept in turn through their gates. For long, it was the custom to chain a fierce watch dog in the Cathedral at night to ward off marauders.

Latterly the cult of Sv. Jan z Nepomuka, which once claimed many devotees in Bohemia, Moravia and Poland, has been declining in popularity. There is a marked falling off of pilgrims to his shrine on May sixteenth. Fewer passers-by on the bridge of Prague stop to touch reverently the double Slavic cross on the parapet that marks the site of his martyrdom. The statement of the great Czech historian Palacky that Jan of the Five Stars was a legendary character, invented to supplant Hus in the minds of the Bohemians, has its supporters.

The similarity between the stories of the two Jans is scarcely that of chance; both masters of the disputed university; both spiritual advisors of Queen Sophia; both done to death directly or indirectly by the wicked Wencelas; both peasant sons of Bohemia.

Nor can the likeness between the statues of Jan of the Five Stars and the authentic portraits of Magister Jan Hus be forgotten. When one recalls that statues of Venus and Diana were given blue robes and haloes and set forth to represent the Queen of Haven, is it too great a stretch of imagination to suppose that the many statues of Hus, which were set up throughout Bohemia and Moravia when three-fourths of the population of those lands was Protestant, should have been economically salvaged after the counter-reformation and made over with fresh paint, a surplice and five shining stars to do duty as another Jan?

For myself, I am more than willing to admit the hero

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of the bridge of Prague to my calendar if only for his chivalry. Jan of the Five Stars is a saint of an order, whom if he had no historical existence, it would be necessary to invent.

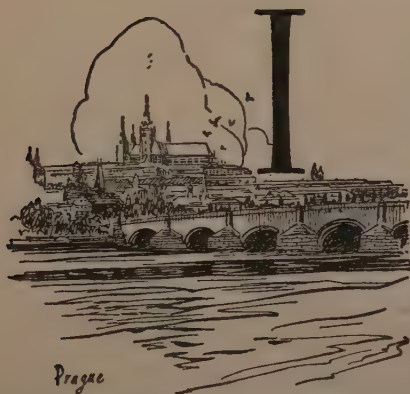
Sunset over Tabor was well worth waiting for. The wide sheet of Jordan pond lying under the western lee of the hill mirrored the crimson and gold glory; above it gleamed the walls and towers built by Jan of the Chalice. The sun dropped lower over the downs, and by the miracle of every day, Jordan water was turned to wine. It spread in a rich purple pool below the hill. Darkness and mystery stole out of Tabor's narrow streets. Somber and prophetic the city rose against the faint sky like the cry of one of those militant prophets of the Old Testament.

Doubtless the carpenter of Husinec could have given me chapter and verse.



CHAPTER FIVE

HUNDRED-TOWERED PRAGUE



I STOOD on the Bridge of Prague. . . . I had been there for a good quarter of an hour . . . looking first over my right shoulder, then over my left. Nor could I decide which shoulder gave the more satisfying prospect.

Over the left: the royal, imperial, now presidential Hradčany, the quick lift of the hill from the crowding roofs of the *Mala Strana* in which the jade green dome of the church of St. Nicholas is set like a jewel; crowning the hill, the long yellow bulk of the palace, pleasantly faded and weather stained and with a hint of gardens about it, and rising from the nest of palaces, the twin grey Gothic spires of St. Vitus' Cathedral.

Over my right shoulder lay the *Staré Město*, the old town, dark and sombre; forbidding grey towers lifting steep grey slate roofs at the bridge head; the squat bulk of the clementinium along the quay; the wonderfully broken line of roofs in the thickly packed quarter between the Vltava and the new town; and rising from

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them, like premonitory fingers, the clustered grey steeples of the Tyn Church where the Reformation was born.

And joining these, in a long languorous sweep of sixteen flowing arches, the great Bridge itself, its parapets set with statues of saints, the muddy Vltava swirling below, and over it in endless flow the life stream of Prague; stout citizens frowning over their affairs; government clerks with brief cases; orthodox Jews from the *Josefov* in long, greasy caftans, bearded and ringleted; newsboys; artisans; sellers of painted gingerbread and poppy seed cakes and frosted, heart-shaped *perníčky*; soldiers in olive drab uniforms, their chests blazing with campaign ribbons; country women in lace caps and embroidered aprons, bringing embroideries to sell to the foreign tourists in the *Vačlavske namesti*; a family of Slovaks shouldering bundles and hampers labeled NEW YORK, THIRD CLASS.

And on either side of the river, myriads of narrow dark streets tortuous and secretive, with old, old houses leaning craftily across them, plotting with each other, waiting greedily to swallow up the life the Bridge will bring to them.

Every city has some outstanding characteristic, some one member which expresses completely the city's soul. What were Paris without its Isle; Seville minus the Giralda; Rome without Brunelleschi's dome glimpsed between the cypresses of the Pincian Hill?

So Prague has its Bridge.

Sixty years younger than the bridge of Pisek, the *Karlův Most* replaced a still older bridge of Queen Judith. The lady, finding herself in bad odor among her subjects, sought to mend matters by building them

a stone bridge over the Vltava. That was in 1169, and hers was the first stone bridge to be built north of the Pyrenees since the Romans laid by their chisels and trowels. Judith's Bridge became a sight for crusaders en route to Jerusalem. It crept into legends and proverbs. Three hundred years it lasted, then a spring flood of the Vltava destroyed it. Forty years later Charles the Emperor laid his new bridge on the old stones.

The *Karlův Most* has a way of intruding itself on every walk that you take about Prague. Did I start for the Vysehrad to spend an hour with legends of Libuša, the queen and her husband, the ploughman Přemysl, whose threshold *praha* gave its name to the city they founded, or to the Jewish quarter, or to the University, or the monastery *Na Slovanech* built by Charles, where the ancient Slavic ritual of Cyril and Methodius was continued until the Battle of White Mountain; to the home of Doctor Faustus, or the house of Hus, even to the American Consulate for mail — whatever my goal, I found myself coming in time to loiter on that arched way, to count the stars in John of Nepomuc's crown, to try to decipher the inscription below the crucifix, which a Jew of the Josefov was forced to erect on the bridge in penalty for mocking at a Christian; to watch the canoes and the swimmers round Queen Sophia's green island, and to look down in the dark canals that lead away into the *Mala Strana*, where old men sit in flat skiffs forever fishing and catching nothing.

And as every city has its distinguishing feature, so . . . and this, too, I decided, standing there on the Bridge . . . every city has its own rightful season. Paris cries out for the spring; London is at its best in

the fall; Seville blooms on Easter Day, and Florence on the Feast of Grasshoppers in May.

The season for Prague is midwinter.

These steep, sombre, slate roofs demand a background of clouds that carry promise of snow. Snow topping the Tyn church steeples, swirling about the Bridge Tower, limning the Gothic stone tracery of the Powder Tower and hushing the trams that jangle about it. Snow wrapping kindly mantles over the really rather distressing, sickly-smiling baroque saints on the Bridge. And snow in the deep maws of the old buildings in the *Staré Město* each one opening, not into a dwelling, but into a maze of still smaller, still darker, still more tortuous passages in which more houses and shops and tenements press ear to ear; in those dark caverns with the winking red eyes of charcoal braziers and old men and women stretching their hands over the coals for warmth.

It would be then that the sausage shops, of which Prague has so many, would come into their own. They are in every street, I am about to say in every block. I know there is one in my hotel opening from the restaurant, where one may wander plate in hand and choose one's sausage or salami from the hook and bear it back to the table in triumph.

These sausage shops of Prague! Only Dickens could do justice to them. Their windows are set forth with larded boars' heads and the pink hams for which Prague is famed among gourmets. Above these, like Christmas garlands, hang strings of sausages, garlands of chubby crimson links, ropes of slender scarlet fingers following the mode of Plzeň, Frankfort and Debrecin, festoons of black sausages — long, slender, short, round, even square. Then the salamis, which, when cut, reveal what

unnamed savoriness of truffle and liver and garlic! The mounds of spiced and pickled pigs' feet! The blood puddings.

Yes, decidedly, Prague is the city for Christmas.

It is reassuring to find that the Good King Wencelas who "looked out on the Feast of Stephen" and seeing a poor old woman shouldering her bundle of fagots, left his palace to take her burden on his royal back, as generations of Christmas waits have sung, was a real person. He dwelt on the Hradčany exactly one thousand years ago, and ever since his spirit has watched over Bohemia as the national saint. I found all manner of preparations going forward for the celebration of the one thousandth anniversary of *Svaty Vaclav* on the coming twenty-eighth of September.

Even in his youth, Wencelas was famed for his piety. Was not his grandmother the saintly Ludmilla? He threshed the wheat and gathered the grapes to make the Sacred Bread and Wine for his people's Easter communion. Report of this travelled through Europe, and the French king sent him, as a tribute, the wonder-working arm of St. Vitus.

St. Vitus was a new saint to me outside of his therapeutic connections. His statue on the Bridge shows him with a cock. But whether this is in deference to his Gallic origin, or only a persisting memory of one Svan-tovid, a god of the pagan Slavs whose emblem was the morning bird, I cannot say.

This is a city which has battled for its soul.

I do not know how one becomes aware of this, what press of roof tree and gable, what lift of spire or darkly

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tortuous street betrays the secret. But it is there. As indubitably as the ringing sentences of the Declaration are proclaimed in the stones of Faneuil Hall.

A curving street, once the line of the city ramparts, separates Prague's old town from the new. This boundary has a truly Bohemian way of changing its name as it goes. Though it leaves the river as *Narodni třída*, it runs the gamut of *Na Příkope*, passes the magnificent Powder Tower, once the city's east gate, as *Na Poříčí*, and comes back to the river beyond the Jew's quarter as *Kralovski třída*.

Its curve embraces a bewildering maze of streets and tiny irregular squares where each morning are held all manner of little special markets devoted to single trades. One morning I chanced on the chimney sweeps' market. Baskets of coal and charcoal and bundles of fagots were offered for sale, and the sweeps in their high black turbans, each with his twig broom over his shoulder and the honest soot of his profession on his cheeks, stood in line waiting to be hired.

The street corners of the Old Town are guarded by stone posts that are carved in grotesque caricatures of men. (Are they the ghosts of practical jokes three centuries dead?) Archways with heavy barred gates lead away into other courts and passageways that are whole cities in themselves and are locked away at night from the life of the streets outside. Old Prague was built by Germans in the midst of a Slav population. This blending gives the city its distinctive sombre and mysterious character.

In all these twisting, sunless alleys there is no flash of color. Men and women go clad in sober black. They walk furtively, too, keeping close to the curving house

walls. There are no flowers, save here and there a pitiful stunted cactus in a pot; no lilt of song. Silent and secretive, guarded and austere, evasive and suspicious, the Staré Město keeps to itself.

This is the Prague of Jan Hus. Here is the little triangular *namesti* where stood the Bethlehem Chapel which Kriz the Tradesman built for the great preacher's eloquence. The chapel is gone, but a tablet on a house nearby marks it as the residence of Master Hus. From here he set forth to meet his accusers at Constance.

Nearby rises the Carolinium, the old building of the Emperor Charles' great university, the first one north of the Alps. Hus was its master from 1401 to 1415. It was in these halls of learning that the teaching of Wycliffe took its roots; round it raged the controversy which darkened all Europe. When Rome was rent by the great schism and when all Europe was divided on points of theological doctrine, Bohemia solemnly decreed that its own University should be the infallible authority on matters of dogma and faith. There was a Pope in Rome and one in Avignon, and the Carolinium decided between and over them.

At the centre of the Staré Město lies the wide market square. How much of the drama of Bohemian history has been played on its stones. Today it is for the most part of the day empty and quiet. The rush and roar of the modern capital barely touches it. Old palaces, now turned to shops and warehouses, guard it on three sides. Their façades still show traces of frescoes of saints, and lines of elegant gilding. One on the south side of the square is rich with sagraffito pictures of the Magi coming to Bethlehem.

The row across the east side of the square blocks com-

pletely the façade of the Tyn, "market," Church. Only its stern steeples rise like premonitory fingers above the curving baroque lines of the house gables.

To find its door you must find first the right one of the dozen archways on that side of the square. Follow the evil-smelling alley crowded with casks and bales and it brings you to a tiny court, barely fifteen feet square. On three sides are the windows of a rabbit warren of dwellings. The fourth is the façade of the church and the steps leading to its Gothic west doors with the niches that show marks of warring pikes and lances.

All the cross currents of the Hussite wars swirled around this high-shouldered edifice. Here the Reformation was born. Here Conrad the Monk preached his fiery denunciations of the wickedness of Bohemia, and the light women of Prague, repenting, pulled the jewels from their breasts and flung them into the alms basins. After him, from its pulpit, Milic and Hus and Jerome denounced the mendicant friars, questioned the decrees of Avignon, lighted the torch which Luther and Calvin were to raise.

Since the birth of the Republic a monument to Hus has been erected in the square. But he needs no monument — least of all here. The very stones cry his name.

They whisper other names as well. A row of crosses and the date 1621 set into the pavement before the Town Hall mark the site of the execution of the twenty-four Bohemian nobles put to death by Austria after the defeat of White Mountain.

The Town Hall, built and rebuilt many times over, still has traces of its fourteenth century origin in the chapel and the great hall of Ladislav II, the king who, after Charles IV, did most to beautify Prague, in the



DALIBOR'S TOWER ON THE HRADČANY



THE VENICE OF THE MALA STRANA — PRAGUE



PRAGUE'S BRIDGE AND THE HRADČANY

dungeons where the patriots were imprisoned before the execution, and the beautiful Gothic portal round the corner from the clock tower. Three old palaces adjoin the hall on this side. Their façades are set with carved doorways and central windows rich in Renaissance decoration and fine wrought iron work. Before them, in the quiet corner, stands a well with a screen of wrought iron as delicate as lace. This quiet angle of the square with its fountain, its old, old palaces looking down, all rich and mellow and soft contoured by the smoothing hands of the centuries, has a charm to rival certain prized corners of Verona and Florence.

But the pride of the Town Hall is its fifteenth century clock, one of those astronomical-astrological timepieces for which it would seem Bohemian kings had such a weakness. It is built in the tower wall beside the doorway, its two dials set between tall rich-foliaged pilasters that support a delicate sheltering gable.

Extra hands tell the hour of sunrise and moonrise; gilded suns and planets and zodiacal signs reveal the secrets of the morning and evening stars. For those who are unlearned in such lore there is another ordinary clock around the angle of the wall, as well as the great dial in the tower.

But even without these, you can almost tell the time of day by the crowd in the square. As each hour approaches, groups gather from the shops and side streets and courts. Apprentices set down their baskets, and market folk their bundles. They stand and wait while the great clock, as unhurrying as Time itself, clicks its deliberate seconds. The Ram and the Bull, the Virgin, the Scorpion and the Goat dance their eternal measure about their lord, the Sun. The bell of the tower clock

tolls, a sonorous, majestic stroke. The shadow of the gnomon on one of the mellow old palaces falls athwart its dial. At last, whirring a little, the astronomical clock strikes.

Immediately, high up under the gable, two little blue doors fly open. A procession of figures . . . Christ and the twelve Apostles . . . pass in review above the unhallowed symbols of Venus and Mercury and Mars. With the final twitch of Matthias' scarlet mantle the doors click shut. The watchers sigh with satisfaction and life in Prague's market square begins a new hour.

The Jews of Prague argue with their brethren of Toledo and Frankfort, each claiming the honor of the oldest ghetto in Europe.

A separate city is the *Josefov*, one more town within a town as is the way of Prague. The quarter lies in the river curve northwest of the Town Square of the *Staré Město*, yet linked with it by a coil of dark streets, through which the life of one town flows to feed the life of the other, while each guards jealously its separate entity.

The Praguers will tell you that the old ghetto was destroyed when the broad *Parižska ulice* was cut through from the Old Town Square to the river a quarter of a century ago. Perhaps. But enough remains to kindle the imagination, to give the clue to that repressed, starved and secret life which went on in every city of Europe up to very recent times. This is the scene of Gustav Meyrink's novel "Golem."

The Jews of Prague had their own Town Hall, their market, their synagogue. A lovely, worn, old shell of Gothic building is the last in which the brass hanging lamps and seven-branched candlesticks glow like jewels,

Built in the thirteenth century, it is the oldest synagogue still in use in Europe. In its burial ground a tangle of elder bushes throws in Spring a veil of white blossoms over the leaning headstones that are graven with the symbols of the twelve tribes and the secret unuttered name of God.

No! Changes and improvements to the contrary, Israel triumphs. These slouching figures in long black caftans, bearded and ringleted under their furred hats, who pass you in the Street of the Rabbis, are not of today nor of yesterday. They are of all time. Just so, silent and self-effacing, the great Rabbi L'owi Bezael went from the Josefov to the Hradčany to instruct Rudolph the Emperor in the dark mysteries of the cabala. These black-shawled, heavy-bodied women who crowd the doorways; their eyes are mournful with weeping for their sons who kept the Josefov against the Swedes in 1648. The Emperor in Vienna sent them a flag as a reward, the highest honor that could then be conferred on a Jew.

Life pulses in the *Josefov* and in the Old Town. Their lanes are crowded, their houses too closely packed with the life of today to leave room for memories. Over the Bridge, on the Vltava's west bank the *Mala Strana* lies empty and violate. You walk its curving streets, past the palaces that were Bohemian first, then, after White Mountain, Austrian, and now, after Paris, are masterless. The windows are blind, the courtyards silent and grass grown.

In the palace of the great Waldstein nothing stirs the dust. The stuffed body of the Duke's war horse paws impatiently awaiting a rider. His gardens, laid out in

Italian manner with groves and grottoes and marble nymphs and satyrs, where he gave those fêtes to which all aristocratic Austria crowded, are waiting for life and love to come and walk there again.

They wait in vain. The life which will come into these echoing streets will come not from the Staré Město but from Prague's New Town that already strains hungrily against the river. The palaces will go. The gardens will go. Utility will come in the room of faded romance. There will be apartment houses in the Street of the Knights of Malta, with pots of cacti and grotesque animals of blown glass on their window sills. And perambulators in the wake of sedan chairs. And over the front doors, the curious will read the names of Waldstein and Kinsky and Cernin and Thurm, the ancient lords of the *Mala Strana* passed on to a dubious immortality.

Already the metamorphosis has come to the Hradčany.

A long flight of steps cut into the steep of the hill leads out of the Mala Strana to the castle's east gate. I climbed it, one morning, stopping on the landings to breath the freshness of the green gardens over the wall, and to look again and again at the panorama of Prague . . . Old Town, New Town, the Josefov, the Bridge and the *Mala Strana* spread below.

At the head of the steps rises the grim bastion known as Dalibor's tower where languished the Polish knight who in the reign of King Vladislav led the peasants against their liege lord. And behind it, the creamy white walls of the tenth century church of St. George. The fountain with a figure of the saint and his dragon used to run with wine at the coronations of Bohemian kings. The church has a beautiful side door with a relief of the

saint, and a noble Romanesque crypt where St. Ludmilla is buried.

A low door at the end of the north aisle, standing open, tempted me into a cloister. Broken, lichen-stained arches framed a sweet, neglected garden. There were pots of stocks and gilly-flowers and some cages of doves, and a bent old man shuffling about the paths. And otherwise, silence. Here lived the community of noble ladies founded by the Princess Mlada, a sister of Wencelas the Saint, whose superior held the right of crowning the queens of Bohemia.

This tiny corner of the Hradčany is peculiarly rich in legends. Smetana, the Bohemian composer, would seem to have had his ear to it. He chose the story of Dalibor, and the wilder more passionate tale of Queen Ludmilla, who was strangled in her own widow's veil by her daughter-in-law, the jealous Drahomira, as themes for his greatest operas. Here, too, is laid the scene of Svatopluk Čech's historic novel, "Mr. Broučelc."

One corner only of this relic of Wencelas' castle town awaits its bard. That is the lane of low-browed dwellings behind the church of St. George, *Zlata ulicka*, "The Golden Street." Here Rudolf the Mad housed the alchemists he gathered from all corners of Europe, among them the English imposter, Edward Kelly. The houses, so tiny as to seem play dwellings for children, are unchanged since the days when these gentlemen of the cabala labored there to produce gold for their master. Once, the story goes, they complained to Rudolf that their quarters were too cramped, and their sorcery suffered for want of fresh air. Whereupon the King had made a number of iron cages and these he ordered slung

from the trees of the garden with an unhappy alchemist imprisoned in each one.

Bohemia has adopted *Svaty Vit* for her own. His grey cathedral, within its encircling palaces, crowns the Hradčany. Old John, "the Luxemburger," began the building of the present Gothic structure on the site of a still older Romanesque church of Wencelas. Fragments of this and of the Good King's palace have been uncovered under the pavement of the present castle courtyard.

There was the steady *tap tap* of chisels at work hastening the completion of the cathedral nave in time for the Feast of *Svaty Vaclev*, then two months off. Through the centuries of Bohemia's greatness, the transepts and choir of the great church sufficed. Here all the kings and queens of Bohemia were crowned, including that ill-starred English Elizabeth whose beauty may have outshone "ye meaner beauties of the night," but whose spirit was unequal to her name, and who was to lose her crown after the fatal way of all the Stuarts.

From the ambulatory a ring of chapels opens, on whose altars curiously painted wooden coffers enclose relics of Bohemia's saints . . . Adalbert and Ludmilla, Cyril, Methodius, Prokop, John of Nepomuc whose body in his silver tomb blocks the right aisle, and the royal Wencelas. Particularly lovely are the star lanterns of colored glass, set before the altars and glowing with tapers on feast days.

The chief jewel of the cathedral is the burial chapel of St. Wencelas. It is made entirely of blocks of the semi-precious stones mined in Bohemia. Against the tawny colors of agates and beryls, the limitless blue of lapis lazuli, the royal rhythms of amethysts and carnelian,

and the cool forest tones of malachite stands the jewelled coffin of the saint. The sacristan struck a match to show me through a square of glass let into one end of the casket, the king's shirt of mail and his helmet. The bronze handle on the chapel door is pointed out as that which the saint-king grasped, seeking sanctuary in the church at Staré Boleslav when his brother struck him down.

But rich in Byzantine splendor as this chapel is, and fine and flowing as Matthew of Arras made his arches, the cathedral of Prague alone of all the great churches of Europe, does not live. A stately hall for religious functions . . . yes, it is that. But a cathedral . . . no. No suppliants kneel at its altars; no poor and old seek refuge and alms and entertainment within its doors. Except for occasional groups of tourists under the charge of a Cedok guide and the sacristan, who nods behind his stall of post cards and little religious books and medals beside the north door, the church is barren. And its stillness is not the hush of reverence; it is the chilly sense of defeat.

Round and about it stretches the palace, wing after wing, courtyard opening into courtyard, a vast barracks of a place in which only a chapel and two great halls remain of the castle of the pre-Hapsburg rulers. In the long side that overlooks river and city, the President has his apartments. Government offices and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs occupy adjoining wings. Official typewriters click in the halls where Maria Theresa's guardsmen played at cards, and sober motors bring stout, sober-looking gentlemen carrying brief cases across the guarded bridge that spans the "Stag's Leap."

So the great transition is accomplished.

If democracy so housed seems a bit strange to an

American eye, if it seems to smack of bureaucracy and military control, one must remember that it has been born late in the day of republics. Born without the salutary experience of a wilderness at its door to be conquered. Born, too, of the Hapsburg tradition, which is quite another thing from the democracy of Washington that strikes its roots into Runnymede.

Modern Prague lying beyond that circle of *Na Příkopě* stirs all sorts of question. This is natural enough because the traveller who goes there today catches it in transition. Hapsburg policy reduced the Bohemian city to the level of an Austrian provincial town wrapped in memories of lost greatness. In the twelve years since the birth of the Republic it has emerged from this obscurity into the light of a great capital. The evolution of other cities has been so gradual that one era melts into another, and their separate symbols are merged into universality. Not so Prague. Suddenly called to world estate, it has put on the garments of modern industrialism with the urgent haste of a man jerked from his bed at the alarm of fire.

The gospel of modern Prague is work. The day starts early. At seven-thirty the coffee houses are filled with earnest-looking business men and women. By eight o'clock the banks, the business offices and most of the shops are open. Does no one in this city, one wonders, breakfast at home?

Prague drinks its coffee in a forest of newspapers. Every *kavarna* takes in at least a score, representing every shade of public opinion and printed in Czech, Slovak, German, and Magyar. The first-class compartments of the trams are supplied with sheets so that pas-

sengers as they ride need lose no revolution of the political machine. For in all these papers there is no news but politics. And politics in Prague carries shades and nuances far beyond the comprehension of an American who is content with two parties and dismisses these from his mind from one election day to the next. As none of these papers carry any appreciable amount of advertising and as there seems no occasion for anyone to buy them, when every coffee house supplies them to its patrons without charge, one wonders how they exist.

The *kavarnas* do not come out into the sidewalk, as is the lighter way of Vienna and Budapest. They lurk furtively in sunless arcades, or down passageways where a shabby bay tree in a tub and the sign *Zahrada* dangling from it promises a garden. A promise that is fulfilled by a square of hard-packed earth on which some tables are set out under one or two plane trees and Apollo, in the guise of a melancholy waiter, offers you choice of the nectars of Plzeň and Budějovice.

All the really smart restaurants are in basements. To be gay in Prague one must go underground. Thus far has the furtive influence of the Staré Město penetrated to the New Town.

The number of Prague's coffee houses is legion. They are clubs, meeting places, recreation and refreshment to the entire population, male and female. They offer, beside food and drink, newspapers and billiards, and in the evenings, orchestras that are not to be despised.

Each *kavarna* has its habitues. There is a story of a foreign visitor who asked a young man-about-Prague for his address and was given a list of seven coffee houses!

The city goes about its business without gaiety or excitement. The street crowds, elbowing their way along narrow *Na Příkopě* and *Na Porici* and the Street of the Irish are prosaic, even grim. They take things seriously, these Praguers. If they have a passion, it is their faith in their own future. It is apparent in all things . . . that vigorous determination to get ahead, not as individuals, but as a nation.

On these thoroughfares one sees none of the handsome pure Slavic types the country towns yield. Titian, it is said, declared that he found his ideal of feminine beauty in the women of Prague. But the steady infiltration of German blood, generations of unhealthy living conditions, and the national diet of meat, bread, potatoes and *knedlicky*, coffee and beer have had their unhappy way with the race.

By what curious irony has a nation that is so markedly without gaiety devoted its energies to the manufacture of cheap jewelry, knick-knacks and gewgaws? The shop windows glitter with brooches, rings, buckles and buttons. There are beads, beads, beads. Everywhere offered for sale are the cheap shoes made by Bata in his model factory city of Zlin on the border of Moravia. Cheap leather goods. Cheap porcelain. Cheap glass and enamelware.

Austria, having located seventy percent of her industries in Bohemia, not only lost her industrial power after the Peace Conference, but endowed Czechoslovakia with its most urgent problem. Where to sell? How to sell? How to keep those wheels turning, those workers fed and clothed and housed? How, above all, to compete with Germany, the ancient enemy?

Meanwhile, phoenixlike, the future Prague lifts its

head from the old. Everywhere building is going on. Scaffoldings block the sidewalks; trams, taxis, *drožkas* and pedestrians take their chances together in the common way. There is the constant screech of riveting machines. Men and stout-armed women, their heads tied in scarlet kerchiefs, shoulder hods of brick and trundle barrows of mortar.

This is the Prague which sits at the elbow of Karel Čapek, which has inspired R. V. R., and "The Life of the Insects."

Practicality and economy, these are the new gods of the Vyšehrad. I noticed with appreciation the automatic public telephones installed on the street corners of the New Town. And the post boxes, painted sky blue with a scarlet Bohemian lion *rampant*, are startling to Americans accustomed as we are to the evasive ways and protective coloring of our own city mail boxes.





CHAPTER SIX

THE CITADEL OF JEWELS



AFTER a week of sober Prague and dead earnest democracy, I, being a typical American, began to hunger and thirst after romance. Just one red turreted castle with a fifteenth century ghost . . . a legend or two . . . a king and a queen . . . or maybe a princess with golden hair and a troubadour sighing at the gate!

Čedok, the efficient Government Tourist Agency, advertised a trip by motor bus to Karlstejn. They hung a picture of the castle over the radiator of the car, and that decided me.

I went into the Tourist Office by the Powder Tower and asked the friendly young woman who spoke English whether, if I bought a ticket for the trip, I could use it in two sections, that is go one day and return the next. This would give me a night at the inn in the village below the castle, and plenty of time for the castle.

It wasn't usual, she said, but she would see.

She withdrew behind a partition and consulted someone presumably in authority. Presently she emerged. Would I tell her my reasons for wanting to make this break in the conventional tourist program?

Blushingly I admitted that . . . that . . . well, I might write a book. I produced my passport which gave my occupation as journalist.

"Oh!" She took the passport and popped back behind the partition, from which she brought out by the arm a neat, smiling gentleman who shook my hand warmly.

In that case, he bowed, Czechoslovakia was happy to welcome foreign journalists. The Tourist Office would arrange to send a special guide with me to Karlstejn; also to accompany me on my sightseeing about Prague. He, himself, would arrange an itinerary for me through the Republic. A letter from the Office would open to me the important factories . . . Skoda, the shoe city of the great Bata. . . . And the Baths. . . . What, I had not seen Carlsbad and Marienbad? That must be remedied. And after these there were also Pieštany, Trencianske Teplice, Luhačovice, Silac and the water cures at Fryvaldov Graefenberg. . . .

Only by a system of evasions and retreats did I manage to escape being personally conducted on that day and on others of my stay, and to obtain the coveted stopover privilege on my bus ticket.

There was not much to mark the twenty-five-mile drive out from Prague except the villa colonies that fringe the city.

The Czech interpretation of modern domestic architecture is unutterably depressing. The idea seems to be to make all surfaces as flat as concrete and whitewash

can make them; to set all the houses flush with the street precluding any hope of lawns or shrubbery; to leave off all the shutters, and this in a land where trees, outside the forests, are almost as scarce as on the American prairies, and for decoration, to set rows of grotesque colored glass ornaments on the window sills. All of the new suburban developments have handsome big halls for the local Sokols, and many have community tennis courts. But golf is as yet an unknown blessing, and gardening, also, is confined to dwarf cacti in pots. In all Czechoslovakia, the only private flower gardens I saw except the cottage door yards were those of the country station masters who managed to fill the tiny square yard between their dwellings and the line, with a mingling of phlox and asters and dahlias and marigolds so closely packed as to resemble a strip of oriental embroidery.

As we left the city limits, we skirted the famous White Mountain which was the scene of Bohemia's defeat in 1620. From the slope of the wooded hill rose a white tower shaped like a star. Here the Winter King and his English queen rested before their state entry into the capital to be crowned. Later, the Star Palace served Frederick the Great as military headquarters when he was besieging Prague.

Presently the valley narrowed and the road wound into the hills. These grew steeper and more rugged. Then the mountain line was cleft sharply. Through the gap you saw another rock mountain rising steep and rugged and bold. And crowning its peak, the castle of Karlstejn.

You recognize it at once. And why not? Have you not known it in a hundred fairy tales? Have you not stormed it with Godfrey de Bouillon and wound your

horn under its walls with Robin Hood? Have you not languished in its donjon with Richard Yea and Nay, and stretched your ear for the *chanson* of Blondel? Have you not built it yourself a score of times, of sand and pebbles on the summer beach and in winter of blocks on the nursery floor? Red roofed and grey towered, Karlstejn is the castle of a thousand imaginings.

Charles, King of Bohemia and Emperor of Germany, built it in 1348 as a treasury for the Bohemian crown jewels. True, it also served his imperial majesty as a refuge from affairs of state, a hunting lodge and a retreat for spiritual exercises. Two burgraves and twenty-two knights kept its garrison, and no woman was allowed to stay within its walls. But whether this was an extra precautionary measure for the safety of the crown jewels, or the result of Charles' four marriage ventures, the chroniclers do not tell. Did not Philip II, who had a corresponding number of wives to his credit, choose to end his days in the monastic gloom of the Escorial?

The village of Budnany lies below the castle hill. It has a *hostinec* of sorts, but halfway up the road to the gateway another inn clings to the mountain side.

I stopped there to leave my bag and to arrange for a night's lodging, as well as to allow the tourist party to go on ahead of me. Half an hour later I pulled the bell at the castle gate.

Within the first entrance a long, paved drive leads steeply along the edge of the cliff to the second fortified gate. This guards the first courtyard with the castle wall, sunk more than two hundred feet in the solid rock, and the house of the burgraves.

On a large stone before the door of this sat a young woman. She was smoking a cigarette and looking about

her with an air of calm detachment. Her head with its dark hair, cut short after the style of a mediæval page, rose above the open collar of a peasant blouse which she wore over a short red skirt that showed her legs to be bare and her feet encased in dusty walking shoes.

She looked at me gravely, then she said in very stiff English, "You are an Englishwoman?"

"No. An American."

"Ah, better still." She got up from her stone, shook out her skirts and came toward me. "I have been observing you. If you are going into the castle I will go with you."

"That's very kind of you," I said.

Every one in this hospitable land seemed bent on showing me things.

She waved a disclaiming hand. "It is not kindness. I will speak frankly. It is that I may practise my English. I do not have many opportunities and it is important that I make use of them all."

"Oh," I said again. And since she had set the mode for frankness, "But if you speak English to me, I shall be educating you, while I will be learning nothing."

"What language would you care to practise?" she replied. "Czech? Serbian? Russian? German? Polish? Ukrainian? I speak all those."

Slightly crestfallen, I was forced to admit that of this collection German was the only tongue I could muster.

"Very well," she ordained. "I will speak English to you and you will correct me when I am wrong. And you will speak German to me and I shall point out to you your mistakes. In that way we shall both learn much."

This educational alliance having been effected, she



THE GOLDEN STREET — PRAGUE



THE ROMANTIC CASTLE OF KARLSTEJN



EVERY MARKET HAS ITS GINGERBREAD SELLER

threw away her cigarette, took my arm and piloted me toward the gate of the second courtyard.

"My name," she said as we went along, "is Ilonka Gregorovna. I am a Ukrainian, a student at the Charles University in Prague. It is now the long vacation but I remain here to hasten my studies."

"And what are you doing in Karlstejn?"

"I am staying at the *hostinec* over the holiday. I saw you arrive there. I said to myself, 'Presently she will go up to see the castle. I will go ahead and wait for her.'"

After all, Ilonka Gregorovna was a decided assistance. The guide's German was sometimes beyond me and when his national enthusiasm got the better of his linguistic abilities he burst into Czech. I should have floundered helpless, but for the septi-lingual Ilonka.

But Karlstejn needs no guides. It speaks for itself. The clang and clatter of the last days of chivalry pervade the long Hall of the Knights with its rows of cupboards, each one emblazoned with the arms of the noble gentleman whose shield and sword it contained. In the second floor of the palace are the emperor's apartments and his tiny oratory. A bridge leads from this to the inner courtyard and the castle church.

Matthew of Arras and Peter Parler, who built the Bridge of Prague and laid the foundations of the cathedral, were the architects of Karlstejn. Frenchmen both, they brought the dreams of Amiens and Rheims to this exquisite little Gothic jewel which is but a casket for another richer gem, the chapel dedicated to St. Catherine. Blocks of Bohemian semi-precious stones form the walls, and paintings of saints and kings, soft and rich

against their gilded backgrounds, panel the altar. The chapel is rich with a Byzantine splendor. Here the Emperor used to retire for periods of fasting and prayer, and his penitent's ration was passed in to him through the tiny window.

Charles emerges from the chronicles as a pious, rather dull man, with one passion, the glorifying of his kingdom of Bohemia. His favorite occupation, it seems, was whittling. The statue of St. Nicholas in the Knights' chapel is believed to have come from his knife.

Beyond the palace and the castle church, in a fourth courtyard, rises the citadel's strong tower, the donjon of the jewels, with walls of stone blocks sixteen feet thick. Below is the powder magazine and armory; above, reached by a richly decorated staircase, the chapel of the Holy Cross. Four doors and twenty locks guarded this sanctuary on whose altar lay the crown and sceptre of St. Wencelas.

These precious insignia, which were a constant bone of contention between Czech, Polish, German and Magyar claimants to the throne, an English queen, in the hurry of her flight, was to leave behind in a pile of baggage on the pavement of the Prague Town Square. How the tenacious, red-wigged old lady of Richmond would have scorned her godchild! Now the jewels having passed through the hands of the Austrians have come back at last, not to Karlstejn, but to the vaults in Prague.

But the chapel itself, more glorious than that of St. Catherine, richer in weight of gold and amethyst and carnelian and agate than the burial hall of St. Wencelas on the Hradčany, is the richest jewel of them all. It is the apocalyptic vision . . . "and the building of

the wall was of jasper . . . and the foundations were garnished with all manner of precious stones. . . .” Your wondering fingers touch these polished blocks set in the gilded mortar . . . “jasper and chalcedony, sardonyx, chrysolyte, beryl, topaz, chrysoprase, jacinth and amethyst. . . .” All are here. Blocks of agate and malachite two feet square, amethysts weighing one hundred pounds apiece; and panels, the height of a man, of the color of the sky at midnight — that is lapis lazuli.

Ilonka Gregorovna and I shared our supper of eggs and mushrooms at a table in the garden behind the inn. And we continued to improve our minds with bi-lingual conversation.

“I will tell you one of our Slavic folk tales,” she said. “It tells how mushrooms came to be. You know they are the food of the poor peasants in all the Slavic countries. And because these people are very devout and must have a religious reason connected with everything, they say that one day Jesus and Peter were walking along and they came to a village where there was soon to be a wedding. The bride was going up and down the street carrying her wedding cakes and bidding everyone to the feast.

“Well, Jesus pulled Peter by the sleeve. ‘See,’ He said, ‘these people are very poor. They have only enough for themselves. We will eat none of their *perničeks*, and when they ask us, we will say that we have dined well at the *hostinec* down the road.’

“Peter had to agree to this, of course. But in his heart he was sorry. The little cakes were so nice and brown and so thick with sugar, and plump with raisins.

When Jesus was not looking, he took three of them and hid them in his pocket.

"So Jesus and Peter walked on, and Jesus was silent thinking many things. Peter took one of the little cakes and took a bite.

"What are you eating, Peter?' said Jesus.

"Nothing,' said Peter. And he threw the cake away.

"Presently, he took out another cake, and bit into that. Oh, how sweet it was! . . .

"What are you eating, Peter?' said the Master.

"Nothing at all,' said Peter.

"And he threw that cake away.

"A little later he turned his head so that Jesus should not see, and bit deep into the third cake.

"What are you eating, Peter?' said Jesus.

"And again Peter said; 'Why, nothing!'

"Very well,' said Jesus. 'I will wait here. Do you go back along the path and bring me what you find growing there.'

"Peter, wondering, went back the way they had come. And all along the way were growing mushrooms. Peter had never seen the like of them before. Indeed these were the first mushrooms in the world. He gathered them up and brought them to Jesus. 'There was nothing growing in the path,' he said, 'only these.'

"These are the good food that you have thrown away,' said Jesus. 'And as you took the *perničeks* from the mouths of the poor, these shall be the food of the poor forevermore.'"

I thanked her; "That is a charming story."

"You should learn Slavish;" Ilonka advised me. "Or, better still, Russian. How long will you be in Prague? It might be that I could give you lessons —"

I said hastily that I was planning to leave the capital during the next week. I was going eastward, into the Carpathians.

"If you intend to travel in Poland," she said as we drank our coffee, "you must travel third class. That is on the long journeys, when you must go at night."

"Why?" I asked.

"Because of the train bandits. They always enter the first and the second class carriages. So everyone travels in the thirds. There with the peasants you will be quite safe."

"I have no intention of going into Poland," I said. "But in Ruthenia, *Pod-Karpatské Rus* —"

"Oh, there everything is quite safe," said Ilonka. "The Czechs have organized the railroads and the local police; everything. But in my country, on the other side of the Black Tisa, things are not so orderly. We Ukrainians have no love for the Poles. In some ways they are worse than our old masters, the Russians. You know, for all their fine speeches, at the University of Warsaw, they do not allow us the same privileges as the Polish students. That is why so many Ukrainians come to the Prague University. Here all students of whatever nationality or citizenship have equal rights. Even the Jews. At our Undergraduates Club we have more than two thousand students representing more than twenty nations. In the *kavarna* you can read two hundred different newspapers, of all the political parties in Central Europe.

I asked her to what party she belonged.

"I am a Social Democrat," she said.

"And how many parties are there in Ukraina?"

She shrugged. "No one knows. Every week a new

one is born, or changes its platform. It is the same in Ruthenia and in Slovakia. Many people belong to three or four. There is the church party, you see, and the agrarian party, and the party against the Jews, and the party that is against the Communists. The agitators go through the country getting the people to join. And the peasants are so obliging they would rather join than say no.

"That is why it is necessary that as many of us as can should study and become clever and powerful. Especially our women. We must work hard to make our country known in the council of nations. For myself, I plan an international career."

I asked her in what field this would lie, but she was rather vague about it. The shining outline of the future was as yet not filled in with details. She talked ardently about international brotherhood and peace and the rights of small nations and the future of the Slav peoples while we walked up and down the road before the inn and watched the night sky pale with the expectation of the moon.

At last it came, creeping shyly over the mountain rim. The massive bulk of Karlstejn loomed with Wagnerian splendor on its crag above us. The moonlight silvered the roofs; burnished the sharp angles of towers and bastions. It set flying a thousand echoes of immortal romance.

Ilonka Gregorovna stopped suddenly in our walk. She swung round in the path and confronted me. "Tell me, Dorothea Feodorovna, do you know what love is?"

Our Anglo-Saxon approach is more gradual. I stammered a bit, but I managed to convey that I was not without experience.

"Ah!" she sighed, and her hands reached out in the darkness, caught mine and pressed them fervently against her breast. "Then I can talk with you. I can open my heart. . . ."

Her voice flowed on.

I gathered that the international career was not the only star on Ilonka Gregorovna's horizon. There was also a young man. . . . "In Jezierka. . . . His father was a grain merchant there. Very well off. Now the father had died and the business has come to Ottokar."

"And now you can be married," I finished.

"Ah, no. You forget. There is my career. The business is in Jezierka. Ottokar must stay there. And Jezierka . . ."

Out of her words arose a vision of the town, its long street ankle deep in dust; the farmer's wicker carts creaking down it, stopping at the inn door; the medley, the smells, the squawks and screams, the bleating of sheep and goats, the lowing of cattle that filled it on market days. The church, drowsy under its orthodox domes; the stout house and stouter warehouses of Ottokar.

There would be no intellectual companionship, no opportunity for the New Woman. Here in Prague, or in Paris . . . Better still, in New York. . . ."

"Ilonka Gregorovna," I said sternly. "You may pride yourself on being an individualist. Individualist — pouf! You're a type. In America there are ten thousand girls exactly like you. No, that's putting it too mildly. One hundred thousand. One hundred thousand girls, with too much college in their systems, complaining that Seattle, and Keokuk, and Phoenix, and Harrisburg, and Montpelier, and Nashville are too narrow for them to express their personalities. That they

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must come to New York. And so they come. And do you know what happens?"

I wagged my finger before her, darkly prophetic. "They end by running tea rooms in Greenwich Village."

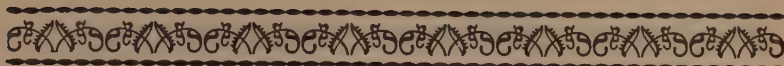
The moon showed me her eyes very big and startled. "Dorothea Feodorovna, what is a tea room and where is Greenwich Village?"

"A tea room," I explained, "is an emasculated coffee house with trimmings of mayonnaise. No, Ilonka Gregorovna, I do not expect you to understand that. Beside, I have broken our compact and am speaking English. It is better that I should go to bed. You will oblige me by remaining here and spending an hour of this excellent moonlight sitting under the pear tree thinking of Ottokar. He is more in the picture than an international career in batik and embroidered smocks. Good night!"

I did not hear Ilonka Gregorovna come upstairs though the inn was small and its sleeping quarters intimate. When I put out my light and opened the outside shutters I could see the glimmer of her cigarette in the dark, and I thought I heard from the shade under the pear tree a wistful sigh.

But whether this was born of longing for the feed and grain merchant of Jezierka, or in contemplation of her international career, I shall never know.





CHAPTER SEVEN

KUTNA HORA



POP! PSSSHSSHSS. . . .

It was the rear tire this time.

"Well, at least there's a tree so you won't have to work in the sun," said P—. She spoke in that over-bright tone that all well trained wives use in moments of domestic stress.

G—, standing in the road surveying ruefully the wreck of our second tire that morning, merely grunted.

A telegram from these old friends, who had been motoring in Bavaria, had kept me in Prague waiting for the honk of their motor horn beneath my window. They were on their way to Vienna; I with my heart and eyes turned eastward to the yet untravelled Slovakia and the deep forested valleys of the Carpathians.

G— had spread his maps on the coffee house table between the cups and the flock of water glasses and announced that by stretching two days driving to three they would take me on my adventure as far as Olomouc.

Now, after an early start, with sixty miles of the two

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hundred registered on the speedometer, our stock of spare tires was already reduced by two.

The road eastward from Prague had brought us through the wide fertile plain between the Vltava and the Labe. Its dusty white ribbon, bordered by lanes of cherry and plum trees, stretched across the striped fields . . . green of clover and sugar beets, gold of wheat — cut and stacked for the threshing. The villages we passed were more prosperous and less picturesque than those lying along the dark fringe of the Šumava. These whitewashed houses wore blatant new roofs of patent shingles on which the proud owners had painted the dates of their construction in figures ten feet high. All proclaimed their origin in the last ten years since the Peace.

But new and patent shingled, or old and deep thatched, each village had its shallow muddy duck pond in the centre and its flocks of geese whitening the fields around about, guarded by small children who waved their willow whips at us as we passed.

Now and then a rounded hillock rose from the plain and from its summit a square white church tower capped by a grey onion dome reared a cautious head. The village it ministered to crouched behind the hill pursuing its little concerns, while the church kept sentinel watch across the plain.

The road was singularly empty of traffic. Now and then a motor coming westward, powdered white, its occupants swathed in dusters and goggles and helmets and veils, betrayed the sorry state of the Republic's roads. For the rest, there were the farm carts, long and narrow with sloping sides made of woven wicker like a basket and drawn by big fawn-colored oxen. Faces of

women and girls, riding to the reaping, stared at us over the sides. Overhead the sun blazed in a cloudless sky.

While G—— changed the first tire, P—— and I sat on the roadside in a tangle of blue chicory and Queen Anne's lace and argued amicably whether this common weed with a royal name took a different godmother in each land where it grew. And if so, could the Bohemian species be said to perpetuate the memory of that Princess Anne of the Hradčany who became England's Good Queen Anne, the supporter of Wycliffe, and for sorrowing love of whom her husband razed the palace at Sheen where they had lived and loved?

Meanwhile, a small gooseherd, sighting us from afar, switched his flock across the clover field toward us. They stood on the opposite bank and flapped their wings and stretched their necks derisive of our plight, while their guardian, round and rosy and towheaded, surveyed us out of unblinking eyes.

The orchestra in the Kür-park was playing one of Dvorak's Slavonic dances when we drove into Podebrady. The benches under the lime trees were filled with grave-looking men and women, no doubt digesting their prescribed glasses of the medicinal water on which the fame of modern Podebrady rests.

"And," said P—— with a grimace as she set down her glass, "it's so nasty it must do you lots of good!"

This old town gave a king to Bohemia. A statue of King George stands in the market place and the castle where he was born, not of the royal line for the crown of Wencelas was his by vote of the Estates, overlooks a wide curve of the Labe winding northward into the valley the Czechs call Paradise.

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The castle is a restaurant now, a part of the cure establishment. Stout citizens sit on its citizen king's terrace and wash away the bitter carbonic-sulphuric taste of Podebrady waters in litres of Pilsener and innumerable cups of coffee.

Now with Podebrady behind us and the chimneys of Kolin's sugar refineries just ahead, came our second blowout.

Our objective that day was Kutna Hora, the "Miners' hill." The hill itself rises behind Kolin and stretches southward into the plain. It is honeycombed with ancient shafts and workings from which Bohemia took her silver for a period of more than five centuries, shafts into which the German Catholic imperialists threw their Protestant Bohemian nationalist captives, calling the place in ridicule Tabor. The mines were abandoned in the seventeenth century but every once in a while a rumor gets afloat that the famous vein has been found again and Kutna Hora suffers the semblance of a silver boom.

Like Tabor, Kutna Hora is lovely in silhouette. The city stretches itself languorously along the ridge like a beautiful woman basking in the sun. There is ease and subtlety and proud consciousness of power in every gesture of her walls and turrets. From the vigorous upthrust tower of St. James' church your eye follows with delight the crest of the town walls broken by houses and the royal *Vlassky dvor*, down the long unbroken yellow line of the Jesuit college now a barracks, to the dark but flowerlike loveliness of St. Barbara's Cathedral. The hillside, rising steeply from a little river, is wooded and terraced deep in gardens. In spring one sees the sleep-

ing beauty on her silver hill through a blossomy haze; autumn drapes her couch with russet and gold. It is a prospect which has lured many painters; Kutna Hora demands the brush as Prague calls for the etcher's tool.

Like Tabor again, Kutna Hora is the church's child. Žižka's town whatever creed it now professes, is of the essence of Protestantism. Its foundation stones are man's conscience and the written word. This city on its silver hill wraps about itself all the emotional richness that is the soul of Catholicism. There is mystery in its streets and, alone of all the cities of Bohemia, save Prague's *Mala Strana*, there is elegance. One senses the long centuries of wealth that gave leisure and power and incontestable authority.

They had time, these builders of Kutna Hora, to linger over exquisite details . . . a doorway, finely placed, is framed in Gothic tracery of leaves and flowers, its very restraint holding a subtle promise of greater richness within; an oriel window looks three ways to the street, each vista guarded by an apocalyptic beast and a faintly smiling angel; a street fountain over whose stone curb the carver has thrown a veil of gossamer tracery . . . all those elegancies that come with long-continued prosperity and an authority beyond challenge. The beauty has been wooed by kings.

From a settlement of German miners imported by a twelfth century Bohemian king, Kutna Hora grew to rival Prague. The *Vlassky dvor* was a favorite royal residence. Here came Hus to plead before Wencelas IV the right of the Bohemians to rule their university without foreign interference. Here lived the Polish king Vladislav who brought so much beauty to Prague. The palace forms a bastion in the walls. To the town it turns

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a gentler face with a little park and flowers and the deep archway leading into the courtyard which is by far the most interesting part of the building. The inner walls break into surprising little towers and turrets and overhanging balconies with little arched bridges flying from one to another. It is like a whole mediæval city in miniature.

One round-faced tower had a door opening on a winding stone stair. No one could resist that invitation. Up we went, and up, to come at last to a tiny oratory dight in azure and gold, with a beautiful fifteenth century triptych over the altar.

A high-walled lane leads away past St. James' church with the pilgrims' shells on its pillars, past the palace, curving along the ramparts, to the terrace before the faded Jesuit college. The balustrade, ivy-grown and set with rows of stone urns and ecstatic saints, marks the sentry lines of the *caserne*. Beyond, the terrace widens to a park with trees and grass and seated, queenly in the midst of these, is the cathedral of St. Barbara.

It is a precious bit of fifteenth century Gothic. Its buttresses spring so delicately that they truly deserve the name of flying. Its windows are jewelled with crimson and blue. Some peeling frescoes on the walls of one of the chapels show the miners of the silver hill as they were in the days when the great church was begun and Kutna Hora was at the zenith of its power. It is delicate and undeniably feminine. It has been likened to the cathedral of Milan, but its color is richer, its form more airy, and its setting far finer than the greater church beyond the Alps. Still, that gives the key to Kutna Hora. The city, despite its origin, is not German. It lacks the heavy grotesqueries of the towns of Bavaria. Slav it is not at

all. Even St. Barbara's three domes deny the lethargy of the Slavs. They refuse to stay domes. They take lightness to themselves and spring into spires. It is a Lombard city, Italian in spirit and design.

Kutna Hora too has its legends.

In the first years of the fifteenth century there lived on the miners' hill a learned man whose name was Jan Cestni. Cestni means "happy" and this Master John translated, after the fashion then current among scholars, into its Latin equivalent. So was born, here in Kutna Hora, the great and much discussed "Dr. Faustus."

The Hussite wars were racking Bohemia. Kutna Hora, stronghold of the papal imperial party, was in a foment. This studious gentleman, seeking quiet and seclusion for certain secret experiments of his own, moved to Prague to a house still standing in the Staré Město.

But Prague was if possible worse than Kutna Hora. The Staré Město rang with war and rumors of yet more war.

Sadly the scholar dropped the Faustus from his name as unsuited to the times, packed his effects and moved to Strassburg. There he signed himself simply "Johannes Kuttenbergensis" . . . John of Kutna Hora.

From Kuttenbergensis, rolled on a tongue trained to the fullness of Slavic syllables or written by a pen too hurried to quibble over a letter, it is a short cry to Guttenberg. . . . At least, so say the people of Kutna Hora.

We slept that night at the Black Horse Inn and woke to find it was market day. The wide *namesti*, named for the great Palacky, was filled with stalls and country

wagons. The saints in their niches on the house fronts — Florian and Svatý Jan z Nepomucka and Barbara patron of miners — perhaps too, as from a more venerable hierarchy the gilded unicorn prancing over the chemist's shop, blessed the barter of fine solid cabbages and heaps of watermelons.

There was a nice arrangement of produce. The lines of dairy maids, each with her brimming pail and dipper, were drawn up along one side of the square. Then came the sellers of cheeses, the egg women, and beyond them a long quacking, clucking, crowing review of fowls cradled in their owners' arms and held out to prospective buyers.

Up a short side street was the mushroom market. The gatherers, chiefly old women, crouched on the stones with little heaps of St. Peter's *perničky* before them. On the wall nearby a careful government had affixed a colored poster showing all safe and unsafe varieties of fungus. *Caveat emptor.*

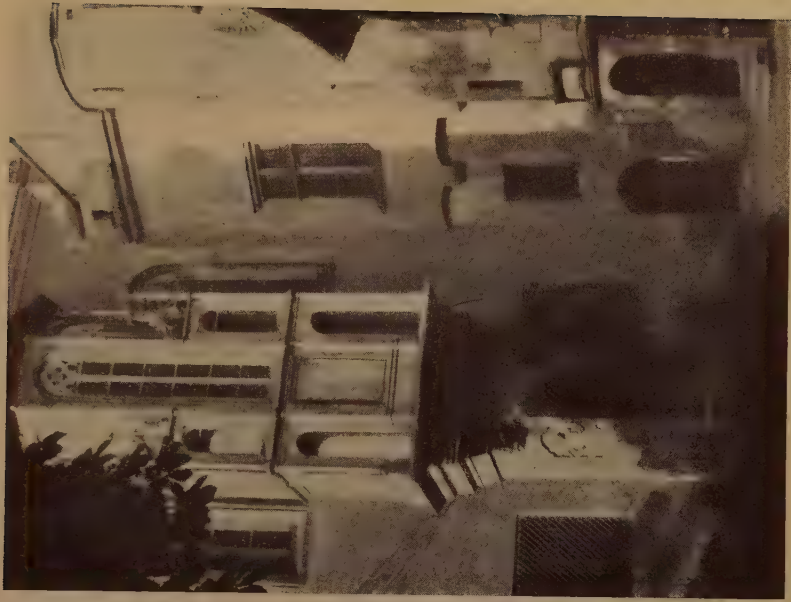
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The plain stretching eastward from the ridge of Kutna Hora is historic battleground. Žižka fought here twice. And here, three centuries later, young Frederick, not yet "the Great," defeated the army of Maria Theresa. He pressed the Austrians so hard that they retreated from Kutna Hora, leaving their bread baking in the ovens. The Prussians came in to feast.

It was at Caslav, the white town out on the plain not ten miles from Kutna Hora, that Žižka died of the cholera. They buried him in the rugged old church of St. Peter and St. Paul standing there since the tenth century, and hung his helmet and battle axe over



ST. BARBARA'S CATHEDRAL SEEN FROM THE
TOWN RAMPARTS



THE KING'S HOUSE IN KUTNA HORA



A STREET FOUNTAIN IN KUTNA HORA



THE MUSHROOM MARKET

the altar of the militant apostles. We drove out to Caslav, but today the town has only memories of John of the Chalice.

When the emperor Ferdinand II came by on his triumphal entry into Bohemia after the Battle of White Mountain, he refused to lay his head in the town that gave Žižka a resting place. His soldiers carried away the trophies, rifled the grave and scattered the dust of the Blind Captain over the plain.

In view of all this local history, perhaps, it is not strange that the monks of Sedlac should have devised their peculiar decoration for their great church. Sedlac lies close under the hill of Kutna Hora along the road to Kolin. We had sped through it on the previous day, now we stopped at the monastery gate. The cloister, disestablished since the eighteenth century has been turned into a tobacco factory, one of the largest in Czechoslovakia. Cottages and workshops crowd about the church gate. Three chubby children peeped at us around the doorpost of one of these and presently came a smiling young woman carrying a baby. She took a key from her apron pocket and unlocked the church for us to go in.

Every square inch of the interior is ornamented with human bones. Clusters of skulls hang from the vaulted roof in gruesome chandeliers. A Gothic tracery of ribs and leg and thigh bones adorns the walls. The arms of the Swartzenberg princes, the hereditary lords of manor of Sedlac, are cunningly contrived out of finger and toe bones.

This macabre decoration made us shiver. But we were foreign. The young mother glowed with pride in all that she had to show. And the baby, reaching a fat fore-

finger into the eye socket of a grinning death's head, crowed with delight.

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Beyond Kolin the road runs across the plain to the thriving town of Pardubice. Then the hills begin. They swell gently and their sides are dark with forests. The golden wheat runs up to meet the firs.

We had left Bohemia behind and were entering Moravia. In this forest Comenius lived the life of a hermit for four years. Litomyšl, a sleepy little place gathered about a palace of Vratislav z Pernštejna, was a gathering place for the Moravian Brethren before they set out for Germany and America. They held their last religious service in the "Rosy Meadow" below the town. Litomyšl still has its Inn of the Sun for which the Sun Inn at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, one of the most famous of American posting houses, was named.

Our road dipped and curved following the windings of a small stream. In the valleys there was shade and grateful coolness. The breath of the forests was sweet after the dust of the plain. Now and again we ran through villages of white-walled, red-roofed cottages whose door yards bloomed with hollyhocks and monkshood. Beside one isolated farmstead was a stone threshing floor where an ox, ridden by a girl in a scarlet head kerchief, trod out the new harvest.

Olomouc stands in a wide valley watered by the Morava. We looked across the harvest fields to its broken walls and the tall, slender, lead-capped spire of its Town Hall which rises, a rather mournful relic of vanished importance, from the broad, stonepaved, sunbaked market place. The richly ornamented, leaden bow window

of the Town Hall chapel looks down on the stalls of basket weavers and brush makers below. A seller of pigeons had set his cages on the flight of carved steps that mount to the lovely arcaded gallery in the Renaissance style across the building's north side.

This hall, like Prague's, has an astronomical clock. It is a complicated arrangement of three separate dials set about with cabalistic figures, and it fascinated G——.

He stood before it working out complicated logarithms on the back of an envelope, in an effort to compute the hour by meridian time from its advice on sunrise and sunset. He vouchsafed no reply to P——'s and my suggestion that he follow the example of the people of Olomouc and take his time from one or all of the four modern clocks and four sun dials which further ornament the Town Hall.

Either Olomouc is unused to visitors, or those who come there are used to astronomical clocks. At least, G——'s curiosity became the event of the noonday. A little crowd gathered to watch him at his calculations. Four or five business men going home to midday dinner halted, finding G—— more of a distraction than the everyday stop at their favored coffee house; a cart, drawn by two panting dogs and filled with pots of scarlet geraniums and marguerites, was halted by its driver who reined in his beasts and stood staring; the baker's boy, going by with two round crusty loaves under each arm, set down the four on the dusty pavement and himself on them the better to observe. Presently, the chemist from the *lekarna* "of the Golden Dog" came across the square to join G—— as a fellow scientist. As their conversation lengthened into many minutes with prospects

of adjournment to the nearest coffee house, P—— and I set out to see the town.

After the richness of Kutna Hora, Olomouc has little of architectural beauty to offer. There are some fine arcaded houses on the long *namesti* which opens through an archway from the market square, relics of the days when this was the capital and cultural center of Moravia. But now the stone fountain before them is dry and choked with dust and the palace balconies flutter with washing and other evidences of reduced circumstances.

Nearby stands the episcopal palace where the stern Cardinal Bishop Prince Dietrichstein governed Moravia for the Hapsburgs. It is said this gentleman having been born in Castile refused to speak any language other than Spanish and he kept his court according to the strict etiquette which prevailed at Madrid. Here in the fifteenth century lived the "Iron" Bishop John, a son of John of Gaunt.

The cathedral built on the site and economically making use of the walls and towers of an early Romanesque palace of the Premyslide princes, stands at the edge of the town forming part of the ancient fortifications. The present Gothic church was begun at the opening of the fourteenth century by the boy-king Wencelas III who was murdered here by his wicked uncle, Albert of Germany. His grave is in the church. The space about it is very quiet. The bland, white-faced Doanery retires within its garden; under the trees before the west door nursemaids in charming, gaily embroidered caps with floating ends wheel their charges. The greatness of Olomouc did not survive its seige and sack by the Swedes in the Thirty Years War which reduced its population of thirty thousand to seventeen



OLOMONC HAS A MAGNIFICENT TOWN HALL

hundred. Now, Brno, the newer capital, has taken its place.

One fussy little tram makes a circuit of the city. Between its rounds there is little traffic in the streets except for the white painted ice cream carts with their tinkling bells that are propelled by dark-skinned youths wearing crimson fezzes, and in the early morning the milk carts drawn by dogs that go clattering on their rounds. When two rival milk companies meet in a narrow street, the dogs straining against their reins, take out their owners' rivalry in barkings and growls and furious jerkings that threaten to churn the milk in the tall zinc cans to butter.

The calm detachment of these Slavic churches must strike anyone who remembers the pulsing life that centers in the cathedrals of the Spanish and Italian cities. Catholic both are, but with what a difference! Here are no beggars and cripples sunning themselves on the steps; no old women filling their last days with devotions at the various shrines enjoying the chance of picking up a bit of gossip or an alms; no round-eyed, wondering children staring at the rounder-eyed *putti* on the Bishops' tombs; no miracle-working Christs and Maries with a circle of penitents kneeling at their feet; no flicker of votive candles pricking the dusk; no pagantry of color; no swell of music . . . no . . . life. Except at the hours of the services, these great churches are swept and bare and emotionless. Many are kept locked, as one finds the cathedrals in Protestant countries.

The religious urge of the Slavs draws them not into their churches but into the open. The meetings of the Hussites on the hilltop of Tabor were due not to force

of martial circumstances alone. They were expressive of something in the Slavic soul older than Jan of the Goose, older than Cyril and Methodius sailing up the Danube from Byzantium bringing the Slavic tribes, the Gospel and an alphabet. From the days of their exile from the Baltic shore the Slavs have been a pilgrim folk. Who can say that race memories prompted their annual trek to the Island of Rugen, a "heathen practice" which all the preaching of St. Adalbert and all the laws of St. Wencelas could not prevent? Who can say how much of this still lives in their yearly pilgrimages to certain lonely shrines, each set on its remote hilltop, throughout Moravia and Slovakia? Once in the year the roads to these are packed with pilgrims; the air flutters with banners; the rocks echo the chant of Slavic litanies. Many of the pilgrims are a week and more on the road. By night they sleep in the fields, by day they trudge through the dust, not in a gay holiday crowd as the Andalusians go on their *romerias*; they are solemn and silent but for the endless shrill chant of the litanies.

And the hilltop reached, with what complete devotion do they give themselves to the sacrifice of the Mass! With what joy, shriven and blessed, they turn, bind the heavy bundles once more on their backs and set foot on the return journey!

Between whiles, these pilgrimage churches are dusty and neglected. But the memory of these sacred hill tops persists in the hearts of the men and women bound in their eternal servitude to seed time and harvest; persists through the long cruel winters, to flower again in due season, and drive them to the pilgrim road again.

For an American, Olomouc's chief claim to fame is its fortress, built by Maria Theresa. It kept Lafayette

prisoner for five years. Austria and Prussia, taking counsel together, chose it as the stoutest prison at their command. Yet the frowning walls were conquered once, and once only, and by that debonair, hero-worshipping young man from Charleston, South Carolina, Francis Huger, who connived to effect the Marquis's escape. The bare historical facts read like a Dumas romance. Every afternoon Lafayette was taken under guard for a drive in the country. The rescuers plotted to overcome the guards at a lonely spot on the road; horses were waiting, and the prisoner spurred his mount toward Silesia. But alas, there was a mistake about the road! They missed the relay of fresh horses and wandered, lost in the forests. Lafayette was recaptured and his rescuers with him.

There was a court martial, and Washington was at considerable difficulty to secure the release of the young Carolinians from the clutches of the imperial high court. Not until two years later was Napoleon able to free the Marquis.

The prison was abolished long ago. The parts which remain are used now as a barracks. P——, who boasts a Charleston great-grandmother, approached the sentry on guard at the gate and asked in German if we might see that part of the fortress which had kept the gallant Frenchman and his American rescuer.

The sentry looked extremely doubtful, not only of our request, but of us. He pulled a long bellrope which brought the corporal, and they conferred together in a tongue unknown to us and casting suspicious glances at us from time to time. Then the corporal went away. The sentry motioned us to come within the gateway and to wait there. He resumed his post just outside. It

seemed to us that he wore now a more martial bearing. Each time he wheeled at the end of his beat he shot a wary glance our way.

Presently, curt steps across the courtyard, an officer appeared. P—— put her request again.

The unbending young lieutenant, who seemed somehow too tightly buttoned in his purple and gold collar, frowned.

“There are no Americans imprisoned here.”

We explained that it all happened a long while ago. It was in fact *historische*.

“Ah! Before the war.” He raised his eyebrows. “Olomouc was then Austrian. . . .” One gathered that for the crimes of Austria and the house of Hapsburg the lieutenant could not be responsible. Nor for the escapades of hero-worshipping Americans. He bowed stiffly; the sentry drew up, presented arms. Our withdrawal was indicated.

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Still memories persist.

That evening, we sat before our hotel sipping our coffee and studying with appreciation the fine, attenuated flight of the *radnice* spire toward the stars. Open, brightly lighted windows across the square showed an upper room where twenty young women of the local Sokol organization were doing gymnastic exercises to music. Round and round the long room they marched . . . right foot; left foot; column by twos; down the center; right wheel; DRESS.

And the tune that flowed from the figures of the unseen pianist was . . . DIXIE.



CHAPTER EIGHT

MAGIC MORAVIA



LOMOUC dozes in the midst of sunny harvest fields. Brno, Moravia's present capital, hides its face behind a pall of factory smoke.

A cordon of smoking chimneys girdles the two heights on which stands the Czechoslovakia Manchester. These mills which make Brno the second city in the republic turn out great quantities of cloth and leather goods. Old Austria put them there to keep her cherished Vienna free from smoke nuisance. How often now she must look across the Danube toward Brno with envy and regret.

If I write of Moravia now it is because its story belongs justly with that of Bohemia. The two states formed the kingdom of the old kings of the Hradčany. The Moravian Estates, at the time of the Protestant Wars threw in their fate with Bohemia in the endeavor to rid themselves of the power of the Hapsburgs.

The Battle of White Mountain crushed those hopes

and established Austrian domination in Moravia until the rise of the Republic during the World War.

As a matter of fact I did not visit the region around Brno until later in my stay in Czechoslovakia. I wanted to see Slovakia during the harvest and so left Moravia to be explored when I turned westward toward Prague on my way home. Then I came to Brno alone.

Once one penetrates that smoke screen which eddies around the uplifted town, one finds the Moravian capital one of the most interesting cities in the whole republic. There is a staunchness about its steep narrow streets. The names on the walls—Masaryk Street, Liberty Square, Wilson Place—have been recently painted over the more romantic and telling legends; Street of the Knights, Gentlemen's Lane, (How many miles of Masaryk—Wilson—Liberty Streets have I trodden in the towns of the Republic! Two score at least. Once in Prague, I found myself shopping in *Hooverova třída*). The high-shouldered houses of wealthy burgesses which still stand about the market place show interesting gateways about which the sculptor's fancy has played. Modern business buildings are pressing these close, however. Brno, like Prague, is in a fever of building.

In the *ulice Dra Rašina*—I will not investigate the meaning of that name lest it prove something humdrum and prosaic and not the title of a swashbuckling gentleman adventurer with a touch of the Turk about him, which is what those syllables evoke from my imagination—stands the pride of Brno, the fine Gothic Church of St. James.

Begun in the thirteenth century when Brno was a growing trade center on the Crusaders' path to and from

Jerusalem, it was completed two centuries later in the period of Moravia's greatness. It is built of dark stone like the cathedral of St. Barbara in Kutna Hora, with five aisles of equal heights and an iron *flèche* which was added about one hundred years ago. The myriads of delicate dark finials, the flying buttresses give an air of elegance. Within are many altars with gilded triptychs, and painted and gilded wooden statues such as one sees in the churches of Bavaria.

One who is at all familiar with the great churches of Europe must have marked the fact that nearly all those dedicated to St. James are peculiarly rich in ornamentation. Especially is this true in German lands. St. James was the patron of the Order of Teutonic Knights. Those who made the holy pilgrimage to his grave at Campostela brought back memories of transmontane magnificence. Some of the golden glory of that shrine on the lonely Galician hillside crept into the churches of the Order wherever they were abuilding. Nuremberg has its fine Jacobuskirche; Sv. Jakuba in Kutna Hora is a close rival to St. Barbara; in Levoča, a town of German colonists in Northern Slovakia, has a church of St. James which is so rich in carvings and frescoes and gilded altars that the town is called "the Slovak Nuremberg." Brno's is easily the finest Gothic building in Moravia, and takes precedence of the larger cathedral dedicated to Saints Peter and Paul on the height at the opposite end of the town.

A monument in the choir marks the grave of Count Radwit of Souches, the defender of Brno against the Swedes in 1648.

And thereby hangs a tale.

Torstensen was the general of the Swedish forces

operating in Moravia. In Silesia and in the towns of the north, he had met with repeated successes. His army was hailed by the Moravian Protestants as their deliverers from Austrian bigotry. But Brno held out against him. At last the Swede sent word to his headquarters that he would continue the siege until noon of the next day, May sixth, 1648, then, if no help came to him and the gates remained secure, he would bow to the inevitable and withdraw.

The Swedish courier was intercepted and the message he carried was brought to de Souches. Truth to tell he was at the point of capitulation; to famine more than to the Swedish guns. That message heartened him. Also it gave him an idea. Next morning the bells of Brno's cathedral rang the hours as always — nine strokes at nine o'clock; ten strokes at ten o'clock, an hour, then twelve clangs of the great bells. Either the Swedes had no watches or they did not trust those they carried. Perhaps they, too, were weary of besieging and had longings for home. At least they took their time from the bells and withdrew. Brno was saved.

To this day the bells of Brno know no eleven o'clock. The women in the Vegetable Market just round the corner from the great church pay no heed to the first twelve strokes. But lest they grow careless of the second chiming a crier with a bell makes the tour of the stalls warning them of closing time. The big blue cotton umbrellas close like tired flowers. The baskets of cabbages and beets and onions, all polished until they glow like jewels, are lifted to strong shoulders and borne down the hill. Two old women whose age and grizzled locks belie their knee length skirts and sixteen petticoats appear with twig brooms and brush away all evidences of the morn-

ing's barter. At one o'clock the square is as empty and as still as at midnight.

In this same quarter stand the Town Hall with its lordly portal — saints and warrior angels in delicate high canopied niches all from the hand of that same Master Anton Pilgrim who added the final glory to Sv. Jakuba — and the elegant sixteenth century palace which housed the Moravian Estates before the disaster of White Mountain.

Just inside the archway of the Town Hall hangs a dusty stuffed crocodile, a "dragon" according to Brno tradition captured by a Crusader in the East and brought here in tribute. Surely it, or the same tradition, gave birth to the gargoyle which overhangs the inner garden of the parliament Palace — a lead dragon fully five feet long, with wings and scales and fire breathing nostrils.

The garden it watches over is a green and restful spot. The palace encloses it on three sides, and on the walls are four sundials so placed that they catch each beam of sun from dawn till dark all through the year. The one over the main entrance is directed by a gigantic and awful Eye. And lest Divinity quail before its task, this is fortified by two of the crowned eagles of the Hapsburgs.

In this palace the nobles of Moravia met in conclave, and here was kept the treasure chest of the duchy which Waldstein stole and divided with the emperor.

The fourth side of the garden is kept by an old Dominican convent now the Town Museum. A richly sculptured staircase leads to upper cloisters. There is a story that when these were dedicated several Jews of Brno were walled up between the arches as a sort of propitiatory offering.

But the chief interest for all who come to Brno must be the Špilberk, the grim, dark fortress on the spur of the hill whose name carried the same threat throughout the old Austrian empire that the Bastile inspired in France, or the word "Siberia" in Russia.

The castle was originally a residence of the royal dukes of Moravia. They built it on the height where their pagan ancestors had gathered to hold sacrificial games in honor of Ziva, goddess of grain, and Veles, the god of cattle breeding, and Perun, the Thunderer and lord of war. The memory of those festivities remains in the name Špilberk, Spielberg, Hill of Games.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Austria used the castle as a prison for political offenders. In addition to the dungeons which old kings of Bohemia and Moravia had hewn in the rock, more cells were constructed in the castle moat; ghastly chambers without air or light and with openings only four feet high through which the unfortunate inmates had to crawl on hands and knees. Here were imprisoned the Italian Carbonari who led the movement to free northern Italy from Austrian rule—Count Oroboni, the Countess Filangieri, the poet Silvio Pellico and others.

Pellico's sentence was "fifteen years hard imprisonment." He served eight of them in one of those foul, dark holes. His account of those years, perhaps as much as the turn of the times, led to the abandonment of that part of the prison. The upper cells were filled with Czech patriots during the World War. One recalls the Czech poet J. S. Machar's story "The Prison," a realistic picture of his own experiences.

But by far the best known of the Špilberk's victims was the notorious Baron Trenck. Trenck, who came of a

distinguished Austrian family, was dismissed from the army for conduct unbecoming an officer. He took service under Russia and commanded a band of half savage Pandours. Later Charles of Lorraine pardoned him and reinstated him in command. Trenck was at once cruel and greedy. The cruelty Austria might have condoned; the greediness struck at her roots. Again the Baron was courtmartialed, and condemned this time to life imprisonment in the Špilberk.

He was confined, not in the dungeons, but in the upper fortress. He wrote his *Memoirs* there before his death in 1745.

There are few traces left of the stout ramparts which resisted Torstenson. Sometime in the last century they were razed and the slope planted with terraced gardens where the sober people of Brno walk on summer evenings and listen to the band playing beside the obelisk which celebrates Austria's victory over Napoleon at Leipsic.

That monument has additional significance for Moravia. The emperor of the French succeeded where the Swedish general failed. He made Brno his headquarters before Austerlitz and brigaded seventy-five thousand troops in the town. The Battle of the Three Emperors was fought fifteen miles east of the city in the wooded country near the present village of Slavkov. A monument marks the site of the engagement. Austerlitz is the Austrian name of a castle of Prince Kaunitz in the vicinity. The Prince, with what seems to us a perverted desire for publicity, hastened to call the battle after his new house, though in reality it was fought nearer another settlement.

The legend of that day's conflict still haunts the

countryside. There are tales of a storm of hail stones as large as pigeon's eggs, which fell shortly before the battle; of the rising of the Punkwa river to alarming proportions — significant no doubt of the two thousand Austrian troops who were to break through the ice of that stream to their death; of real tears wept by the statue of the Virgin in a wayside shrine on the road to Slavkov. So revered is this statue that the original wooden chapel has been encased in stone. It was a scene of many anxious pilgrimages during the years of the World War.

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Thirteen miles to the north of Brno lies the famed Moravian Karst with its caves and the two subterranean rivers, the Sloup, and the Punkwa.

It is a region of low hills with outcroppings of limestone. Through fissures in the soft rock the rivers have forced their way, opening a labyrinth of caverns that are hung with stalactites and are of amazing beauty. It is a hidden fairyland, not a little terrible as all the things of faery must be.

Catherine Cave, the largest of the dozen or more grottoes which have been opened — how many more are hidden deeper in the Karst no one can tell — is more than three hundred feet long and is sixty-five feet high. Hundreds of stalactites, white, amber where a vein of iron has impregnated the limestone, porphyry red, aquamarine, hang from the domed ceiling like the fantastic dream of some Gothic builder. Water seeps, a drop at a time, through the cavern's wall, perhaps one hundred drops in a day, each drop carrying an infinitesimal sediment of calcium; the sediment collects grain by grain,



A GROUP OF MORAVIAN WOMEN RESTING BY
THE BIG FOUNTAIN IN VACLAVSKE NAMESTI



HODONIN, BIRTHPLACE OF PRESIDENT MASARYK



THE GOTHIC DOOR OF THE CISTERCIAN CONVENT NEAR BRNO



PERNŠTEJN OVERLOOKS THE MORAVIAN FOREST

elongating itself an eighth of an inch in a century, growing, growing to join its mate, which rises infinitely more slowly from the cavern floor. Many had effected their union. With this secret alchemy the earth renewed itself; so a rock was born.

Some of the caves like those that are named in honor of Masaryk and President Wilson, are entered by boat. You steal with the river through the bowels of the earth. The passage the stream has cut for itself is so low that you must sit in the flat-bottomed skiff with hunched shoulders and head hung low. So in that chill, dark silence you float on, to emerge suddenly into a vast grotto hung with stalactites which shine in the electric light which your boatman has skillfully switched on, like the treasure chamber of the Elf King.

The series of caves called Machoca are connected by underground passages which bring you at last with the Punkwa to the Machoca abyss. This great chasm, four hundred feet in depth — “the deepest hole in Europe,” the guide says proudly — was doubtless once a mammoth cave like the others in the chain. At some time, ages ago, the roof fell in and the earth’s secret stood revealed.

To stand at the top of the cliff and look down into that deep, dark well to the sullen waters below is a terrifying experience.

Machoca means Stepmother. The place takes its name from the tale of a jealous second wife who threw her husband’s child over the brink. The child’s clothing caught on some bushes half way down and there it hung until evening when the father, a wood cutter, passed by, heard the cries and rescued it. When he confronted his wife with the knowledge of her wickedness, she took

her own babe in her arms and flung herself from the cliff.

One sees that red-kerchiefed, red-shirted figure twirling down into the horrible dark maw and borne by the river into the secret places of the earth, an offering to the dark gods of the underworld.

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I do not know how other travellers discover things. One sees them with well-thumbed guide books, setting out on their conscientious rounds from museum to church, from church to railroad station and by the next train to another "sight." They "do" a place with a thoroughness that leaves me — loitering in the shade by a preposterous baroque fountain full of mermaids and apostles, bishops, tritons, St. John of Nepomuc, Proserpina and symbols of the Holy Trinity — a fountain that is a very cross section of life with as much philosophy as water springing from its jets, but one which no conscientious, well informed tourist with a reverence for Art would glance at without a shudder — leaves me, I repeat, gasping.

I cannot learn a city at that pace. So approached, it speaks no voice that I can hear. So I must let others move on before me; I must linger at Brno's Hotel Astoria. The grander "Grand" had claimed to be full and waved me away. For which I shall always be grateful. The Astoria offered all the economical delights of cleanliness, smallness and quiet. Also it had a breakfast room in flowered chintz covers and clean linen cloths that were the more appreciated after the wet-ringed, bare, coffee-room tables of most Bohemian hotels.

I must go down to Hodonin, the sleepy little town,

beside its mill pond, that holds the reflection of onion domes and high gabled stone houses. Masaryk was born there, just eighty years ago. Who will measure the greatness of this coachman's son, the University Professor who looks like a Kentucky colonel, the clearest figure to emerge in Europe in the past half century? Masaryk and Woodrow Wilson — one suggests the other. But the Moravian has what the Virginian lacked, an ability to execute equal to the ability to dream.

When a student at Leipsic, Thomas Masaryk met and married an American girl, Charlotte Garrigue, of New York. His wife's name he has made his own.

Hodonin seemed to me an ideal place for a future president to grow up in. There is a small river running between back gardens, a river full of flat-bottomed boats and frogs to be caught. And plums and pears and cherries in season may be stolen by merely climbing up the walls over which the branches hang so temptingly.

I must go to Břeclav, the city on the border of Austria. Napoleon came through it, marching on Brno. The scars his artillery left on its walls and round tower-gate have been effaced by the ivy and trumpet creepers. Perhaps to that historic event can be traced a peculiarity which sets Břeclav apart from all other towns of Czechoslovakia. All the signs in its railroad station are in French. Elsewhere Czech, German and Magyar are the languages used for public notices. Not in Břeclav; there the Gallic tongue rules supreme.

Close to Břeclav stands the castle of Lednice, a country house in English Gothic style, and reminiscent of Hluboka in its river meadows. More interesting, however, is the older town of Mikulov with the great house of the Dietrichsteins rising on a hill from its midst much

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as the fortress of the Rožmberks rears itself above České Krumlov.

Here was celebrated the historic wedding at which the Emperor Maximilian, the bosom friend of the bridegroom presided. The company sat down to supper in the great oak-panelled banquet hall with its six doors leading out into the tower balcony, one even larger than that at Heidelberg, and from which the Dietrichstein princes could survey their thousands of acres of farm and forest and precious vineyard with here and there the ruin of a lesser castle of their own, rising on a rocky crag. And at that feast, like a tale from the pen of the Brothers Grimm, the middle tables were occupied solely by kings and queens, while princes and dukes sat around the sides, and mere counts and countesses waited on their betters.

One may still see the gargantuan wine casks in the cellar which brimmed for that supper.

Mikulov had its stormy days, too. It was captured by the Swedes in the Thirty Years War. They made the Cardinal Prince Dietrichstein, he who lorded it in the Spanish manner in Olomouc, a prisoner in a nearby convent. He was to get out ultimately and lead an army to defeat them at Kalisch; all of which he had recorded in a series of frescoes on his palace walls.

Another emperor, greater than Maximilian, was a guest at Mikulov. Napoleon spent the night before Austerlitz here and breakfasted heartily before riding forth to conquer. And here Bismarck made peace with Austria in 1866.

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Gradually, in these wanderings, I became aware of the essential difference which divides Moravia from its sister, Bohemia.

It is an older land, older and more gentle. Moravia was the seat of a great Slav empire at the time of Charlemagne. Indeed, it was a close rival to the Frankish kings. Then came the Magyars. They conquered and held it for half a century. Bohemia won it back. With its annexation to the Bohemian lands, a new influence crept into Moravia. It came from France with the monks of Clairvaux who began foundations throughout Moravia in the effort to bind the Slav Christians who had received their teaching from the East, closer to the Church of Rome.

Scattered throughout the margravate are many old convents and monasteries of the Cistercian order. That at Rajhrad on the outskirts of Brno, was established in 1048. Its library of nearly ninety thousand volumes contains the history of mediæval Moravia.

For close to four hundred years, these foundations directed the culture of Moravia. The French influence was deep ingrained before the coming of the Germans. And, be it noted, where these came they were Swabians; not the harsher Saxons who migrated over the Krkonose into northern Bohemia, and who soon had their hand on Bohemian politics and trade.

Ancient history — yes. But of just such long ago happenings modern characteristics are born.

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I have said that when I came to stay in Brno it was on my return journey to Prague. When I left the Moravian capital it was to take the road westward. I arranged to go by motor as far as Nedvědice to visit the castle of Pernštejn, seat of the mighty Vilem and Vratislav z Pernštejna, who ruled northern Moravia as the Rožmberks reigned over the Šumava.

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The way led along the green valley of the Svratka. The road was lined with plum trees on which the blue fruit hung thickly. Red-skirted, red-kerchiefed women were picking the crop preparatory to making the plum wine which is the drink of the peasants hereabouts. On either side the valley marched dark forests. The fields between were trim and closely mowed, and thick starred with purple autumn crocuses.

We ran through Kuřim. The weekly market filled the little town with geese fattened for Wencelas Day, only four days off. The English just as religiously eat goose at Michaelmas which coincides with the feast day of the Bohemian saint-king. Did Good Queen Anne who was a Princess of Bohemia take the goose eating tradition to England with her?

On the hill beyond Kurim rose a romantic grey castle ruin. The guide book gave it an unpronounceable name — Veverška Bityška. It was built in the eleventh century to guard this road leading into Bohemia — a road travelled by many a caravan out of the East.

A few miles and we ran under the lee of a stout wall with corner towers and strong gate. It guarded Predklasteri, a Cistercian nunnery built in 1233 as a retreat for gentle, noble ladies.

The farms and outbuildings along the walls are now the property of a local farmer and brewer. Threshing was going on, on a stone floor beside the church. Half a dozen bright-cheeked country girls in scarlet kerchiefs and wide spread blue skirts swung the flails to a chant that had nothing to do with the saints and angels carved on the church door. It is a magnificent portal, rich fourteenth century Gothic, the stepchild of Rheims and Amiens.

Round the corner of the church the graciously curved mellow-colored convent, built in the sixteenth century, remains. It houses, today, fewer than a score of nuns. Their director, a chubby little priest, French, and looking in his white robes like a Giorgione cherub turned monk — showed me about. Within the church a wave of pink and gilt baroque with a great many high pompadoured female saints looking like the portraits of Maria Theresa have supplanted the fine Gothic which the west door promises. The church was redecorated, alas, after the Thirty Years War, in which Torstenson plundered the convent.

The priest, telling the tale, led me to the high altar. There, each in its separate niche, macabre offerings, stand the skulls of nine nuns who died at the hands of the Swedes.

There is a cloister, a bit of the work of the fourteenth century French builders. Fortunately it was spared both the violation of the Norsemen and the attentions of the baroque restorers. Its pointed arches are filled with delicate stone tracery as lovely as any to be seen south of the Alps. When the convent was disestablished the cloister went with the farms to a lay landlord. He used it for a storehouse for his brewery. The escutcheons on the grave stones along its aisles have been worn smooth by the rolling of countless barrels. Recently the Cistercians bought it again and will restore it to its ancient use.

The castle of Pernštejn, grey-walled, red-roofed and turretted, rising above the forests, overlooks northern Moravia with the eye of a battle-scarred old eagle. Gates and courtyards, draw bridge and portcullis and the tall round tower that hides the dungeons at its

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base and is connected with the castle proper by a bridge, high up, where no groan of captives could be heard — all these sweep away the centuries. Parts of the castle date from the eleventh century. A yew tree growing by its wall — Pernštejn archers cut their long bows from it when they followed blind King John to the field of Crecy — is reputed to have passed its millenium.

For nearly forty feet the wall of the castle rises from the mountain rock like a pinnacle of the rock itself, and without a break. The entrance is effected by a long flight of steps in a covered way; in the old days it was an inclined plane down which the knights rode clattering.

The Pernštejns were great folk, Slav barons who had resisted the Magyars, and rose to almost royal power when Moravia and Bohemia became a united kingdom. One Vratislav z Pernštejna in the sixteenth century was so mighty a man that Church and State permitted him two wives, or, at least, hesitated to refuse them. A naïve portrait of this lord with a countess on each arm and flanking lines of sons and daughters hangs in a corridor of the castle. There is also a curious painting of Waldstein, presenting his seven sons all in battle array to the Emperor. "Behold the soldiers I have bred for you," is in the gesture of the Duke's hand.

Waldstein was a frequent visitor to Pernštejn. He was one at that gathering of Moravian nobles held here, in secret, when they decided to cast in their lot with Bohemian Estates against Austria. Waldstein was the spy who reported the "conspiracy" to the emperor and received a dukedom for his treachery.

The Hall of the Conspirators and the circular chamber in the top of the tower, with its eight windows, that was

used by Bismarck as a study when he occupied the castle in 1866, are shown to visitors.

Not the least imposing feature of the castle is the great hall the walls of which are covered completely with antlers. For more than a century each stag shot in the Pernštejn preserves has been so honored. And the Mittrowskys are excellent marksmen. The antlers range from mere "buds" to great horns measuring five feet from tip to tip.

Count Mittrowsky, the present owner, uses Pernštejn as a summer home. The living rooms are furnished with brocade covered chairs and sofas—somehow they seem a little pitiful there against those militant walls. I was shown the bedroom and school room of the little daughter of the house, down a stone passage with curving walls. What chance has modern education to be "modern" in surroundings such as these? The facts in the history books and on the teacher's tongue must be shouted down by these stones. Democracy, republics, psychology, the Einstein theory—the youthfulness of all these is rebuked by that admonitory tower.

Pernštejn too has its ghost. Not, alas, a *hochgebornenen* spirit like the White Lady of the Rožmberks. Indeed, this wailing thing which wanders through the corridors is a matter of annoyance rather than pride; the ghost of a mere serving-maid who saw the devil and died of the sight.

The castellan opened the door of the fatal chamber a bit grudgingly. I had asked for ghosts—twice. And his duty was to show visitors Pernštejn's ancient and present glories. But one saw that he had no relish for the supernatural.

"She was a fine, handsome girl, and vain. She spent

more time at her mirror than at her work, or over her prayers. The castle chaplain warned her. And then one night — you see that door there —” he broke off to point out a low door in the opposite wall. It led into a narrow passage that became a flight of stairs going down to the courtyard. “One night she sat there at her mirror and the devil himself opened that door and came in. And in the morning they found her dead.”

“And now her spirit haunts Pernštejn?” I asked.

“Sixty-eight years have I lived here and not once have I seen it,” he spoke so vehemently that I wondered. “Old tales. Pah! Rubbish!”

And catching my eye, sensing perhaps an agreement he had not expected, he moved to a curtain hanging on the wall; drew it back. On the wall some sceptical hand had painted that scene. The girl at her mirror, a Rubens’ Lorelei, the comb in her golden hair; the little door opening, and entering at it not his Satanic majesty but — the chaplain. In monk’s robes, true; but with a cavalier eye.

There were no other visitors to Pernštejn that day. The castle was mine. The forester’s wife gave me lunch under a tree in the outer courtyard where I could look up at the gallantry of the towers and the crimson guidons fluttering from their peaks. The castellan, who was her father-in-law and between whom and me there was now a secret bond, picked a dozen noble dahlias from the Count’s garden for me to carry away as a *denkmal*.

And all through a long lazy September afternoon, I journeyed up the valley in the slow train, past Ždar, where the monks of St. Bernard had a great house, and now, a great place for winter sports; past Přebyslav where Žiška sickened and died of the plague; to Nemečky Brod which is in Bohemia.

The prevalence of that “Nemečky” in so many place names gives proof of the countless German settlements throughout this land. Nemečky Brod — German Ford. Žiška won a great victory there. Despite his orders, his men plundered the town. The stern old captain marched them back a year later to do public penance in the market place before the people they had robbed.

Was it Žiška, or another, who set the skeleton over the door of the Town Hall? A terrible figure with scythe and hour glass and a grim motto.





CHAPTER NINE

RED KERCHIEFS OF KYJOV



HO, ye youthful swains top-booted and lithe,
Ho, ye damsels in scarlet wear,
In Kyjov town ye ever were blithe,
And blithe shall ye ever be there . . .”

That verse of Peter Bezruč had set me thinking long ago about eastern Moravia and its market town Kyjov. Then, in Hodonin, escaping from a sudden shower, I discovered and found refuge in the House of Moravian Artists, where was an exhibition of the work of a group of modern painters. There were portraits of old peasant men, magnificently wrinkled; of young brides in the full-spread glory of beaded, flower-decked head dresses; of comely farm women, and young girls wearing the scarlet kerchiefs that are peculiar to the district along the Morava where the Slovaks and Moravians have intermingled and have produced a culture that is distant from both parent stocks. There were

threshing and harvest and cattle fair scenes set against a background of golden stubble. And landscapes in which snug, white farm-houses with blue-painted doors and window frames lay close folded in the billows of wheat lands, with a blue sky overhead and puffy white clouds that repeated the forms of the earth beneath them.

Many of these sketches bore the magic word *Kyjov*.

I looked up Kyjov in the useful Railway Guide and found it lay some forty miles east of Brno, a matter of an hour and a half by the early morning train. I determined to make my expedition on a Sunday when I would be sure of finding the town in holiday attire.

The route led away from Brno's factory district across the wooded ridges where Napoleon marshalled his seventy-five thousand troops to defeat the nearly ninety thousand combined forces of Austria and Russia. When we emerged from the hills into the wheat lands, we passed a field made famous by another emperor, Maria Theresa's son, Joseph II. Once while driving over this road in his gilded coach the emperor, who bears a striking resemblance to France's "Citizen King," Louis Phillippe, saw an old peasant ploughing. He descended, took the plough handles from the old man's hands and finished the furrow for him. A real, kinglike job he made of it, too, they say.

Kyjov is the market town for a wide farming region. It is a simple little place without pretensions to beauty, culture or historical interest. Around it on all sides stretches the rolling plain through which the Morava runs away to the Danube. A land flowing with milk and wine and honey; of thrifty farmsteads and well filled byres; of sleek, fat oxen and the fine strong horses of Magyar strain which these Hanaks have bred for hun-

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dreds of years. The vineyards and the wheat alternate on the rolling fields.

Spring in this land is ushered in with ceremonies that have their origin in pagan rites. In each village a figure of a woman is fashioned of straw. This is dressed in gala attire, each girl giving a bit of finery, a blouse, or an apron to deck the "Morana." Morana was the goddess of Death of the old Slavs. On the third Sunday before Easter the figure is taken with ceremony to the nearest water and thrown in. And all the youths and maidens, holding hands, return to the village singing, "We have thrown away Death! Let Winter be gone! Let Spring come in!"

Directly after this begins the decoration of the Easter eggs. The eggs are blown, the shells dipped in wax and when this hardens a design is etched in the wax with a sharp pointed stick. Then the egg is dipped in dye. More wax is put on and more decoration added and the egg is dyed a second time in a second color. Then the excess wax is melted off leaving a varied and colorful design. At Easter the eggs are fastened to a little tree and carried about the village by the children.

Many of these eggs are as lovely as though they came from the hands of a goldsmith. Father M—— at Velehrad gave me two. Yellow and red and purple formed the intricate design. Yet these had been made by two of his pupils, small boys under twelve years of age.

The region was a stronghold of the United Brethren — the Protestant Moravian church which succeeded to the Hussites. After 1620—that date is as decisive in the history of the Czechs as 1776 is in American history and all things date "Before or After White Mountain"—the Brethren gathered their portable goods and migrated to

Saxony, where they found a refuge on the estate of Count Zinzendorf at Herrnhut. From Herrnhut, a century later, they emigrated to colonies in Pennsylvania about Bethlehem, and at Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Many families, long settled in those American communities, trace their ancestry to Kyjov and Uherské Hradiště Stražnice, or Kroměříž—towns along the Morava.

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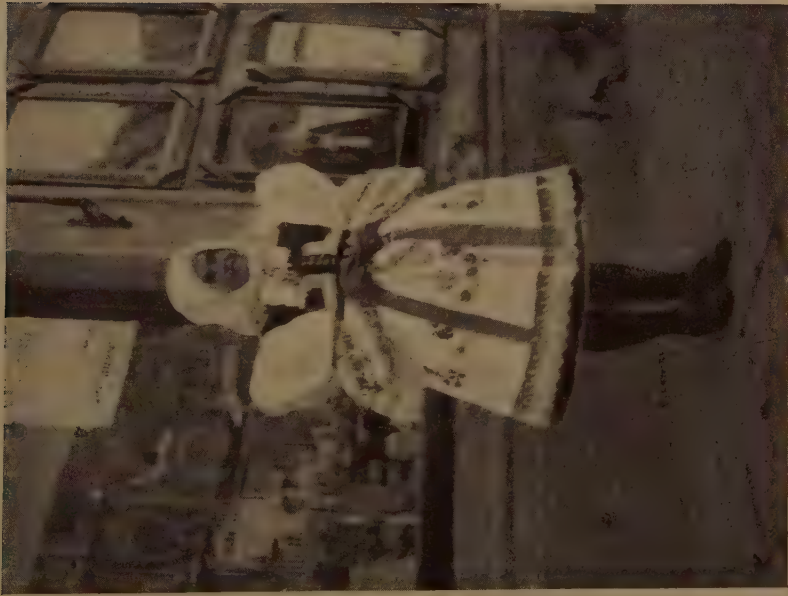
On that Sunday morning my train had left Brno at half past five. A great many trains throughout the republic seem to leave at this hour so that it seemed as though the major part of my travelling was done before breakfast. It was not yet eight o'clock when I got to Kyjov, yet the wide, main street of the town was already alive with the "before church" market. A double line of stalls was set out on the pavement. They fluttered with ribbons and lace, with lengths of scarlet calico, and flowered silk brocade for bodices—all the things to tempt a woman. It seems to be a rule that the Sunday markets shall be more decorative than utilitarian. I never saw one in which food stuffs predominated. Bread is sold, and *kolačes* and frosted *perničeks*, and quantities of gingerbread figures—babies in swaddling clothes, and horses, and knights astride them—decorated with pink and white sugar and little pictures of saints and heroes—Masaryk and St. Wencelas and the Virgin. There are usually two or three stalls that offer fruits—blue and yellow "egg" plums, and cornucopias of grapes with the honey bees thick on them, and the small, hard, green pears that grow along the railroad right of way.

But the main interest of the Sunday market is in woman's dress and fripperies.

About these stalls was a press of figures. And such figures! Petr Bezruč and the painter Joža Uprča who filled a sketch book with three score different "studies" and all the artists in the Hodonin exhibition had not exaggerated. These women in their very short, very full, thickly pleated skirts of bright scarlet calico, that were spread over half a dozen petticoats, their high, polished black boots with the clicking wooden heels, their dark aprons that blazed with embroidery in white and blue and scarlet, their tight bodices of silk brocade from which the very full sleeves of fine linen starched to stand out sharply from the arm for at least ten inches, and the ruffles of finest embroidery and lace that fell from these, the fine Sunday head-kerchiefs of white linen edged with lace or made of the appliqué which is as delicate as any lace over the close fitting lace caps — all these filled that quiet little street of Kyjov with drama. They were like a flock of brilliant exotic birds suddenly alight there before the church, and destined as suddenly to wing away.

These white kerchiefs were Sunday wear. On all other days, the invariable head covering of the Moravian peasant woman is the scarlet kerchief which Joža Uprča has immortalized. Every village has its own way of wearing this, and many and varied are the ways in which that square of red cotton can be twisted.

Their men, sober enough beside this scarlet wear, stood along the curb, looking on, tolerant of feminine weaknesses. The habitual wear for the men is dark blue; the tight trousers fitted into high, black leather boots; the sleeveless jackets, embroidered on back and



KRISTINKA IN HER BRIDAL FINERY



IN KYJOV STREETS, SUNDAY MORNING



THE MONASTERY ON THE SITE OF ANCIENT VELEHRAD



PILGRIMS BUYING RELIGIOUS AMULETS

front with scarlet and yellow wools, over shirts of fine linen that have embroidered wrist bands and collars buttoned at the back, and bibs of colored embroidery.

One guessed that the youthful swains took this opportunity to appraise the beauties. The Sunday market under the aegis of the Church, deals in marriages, too.

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I was in the act of buying a long bread twist, golden crusted and sprinkled with poppy seeds, to take the place of the breakfast of which the early train had deprived me, when I became aware of a man, standing on the opposite curb and regarding me with more than the usual interest given a stranger.

He was a little man in a blatant new suit of purple worsted—one guessed that the salesman had described it as “American”—tan shoes, and a green Tyrolean hat with an imitation chamois brush. There was about him something vaguely familiar. That strut of self confidence; belied by the anxiousness of his eye; the moustache, one end of which bristled militaristically, the other drooping in a shame-faced way as though unable to sustain the pose. Where had I seen them before?

He came across the street, smiling tentatively, hoping, one read it in his eye, that I would remember him. Afraid that I would not.

“Without my uniform,—” he murmured.

Recollection came. In the bus returning from Mikulov to Breclav, not a week ago, he had sat opposite to me. Not clothed as now, like a German clerk on holiday, but in the well worn uniform of a sergeant of infantry with a row of campaign ribbons blazing on his chest. He had

leaned forward, planting both hands importantly on his knees, putting his precise, polite but persistent questions: "Where are you going? Where have you come from? Are you travelling alone? Do you like Czechoslovakia? Are your parents dead? How much does it cost to come here from America?"

And growing confidential, he had taken from his pocket a shabby wallet, and drawn from this for me to see the photograph of a stolid looking young woman with a baby on her knee and two older children pressed against her elbows. "My wife! Our children!" he had informed me.

I admitted now that, without the uniform, recognition was somewhat delayed, and we shook hands.

"I am discharged," he informed me. "I leave the army. After eleven years. That day I had been to Mikulov to wind up some affairs. Now—" he puffed his chest as though it still bore the campaign ribbons, "I am getting married."

"But your wife," I stammered. "You showed me a picture —"

"Of Lina, yes. My first wife. I am a widower."

Under the circumstances one did not know whether condolences or congratulations were in order. I made vague murmurings which might be interpreted as either.

"With three children," he continued. He took from his vest pocket a comb, removed his hat and combed his hair vigorously:

One grows accustomed to this habit of the Czech and Slovak men. The women carry no vanity cases and have not the sign of a powder puff. But every man, it would seem, carries a comb and uses it at every opportunity, and without self-consciousness.

The little man put his hat on again and turned to me, beaming beneath it. "So! I marry again. A cousin of Lina's. She is a country girl with a little farm, six kilometers from here."

"And you will be married soon?" I asked.

"Today." He pulled down his vest, threw back his shoulders with the importance of a bridegroom. "There will be quite a party. All Kristinka's relatives. They are Lina's relatives, too. They know that I make a girl a good husband."

Then, in a burst of pride, "If you will do me the honor to come with me to the end of the street, we will find Kristinka. She is waiting for me. She had a bit of finery to buy at the market. Now we go back to her village in the nine o'clock auto-bus."

I went with him to the end of the street where his Kristinka was waiting outside the apothecary's. She was a brave figure in her marriage day attire. Fine scarlet wool, her pleated skirt; short enough to show the lace frills of her ten petticoats. Fine white linen her apron, embroidered with roses and tulips and little evergreen trees. Cobwebby fine, her kerchief over the married woman's cap she wore that day for the first time. Her smile, her shyness, her pride, her, oh, so patient adoration of this magnificent male who had come into her life — all these rang like a chime of marriage bells.

I suggested that we adjourn to the garden of the Hotel Slavia, there to wait for the auto-bus and to drink to their good fortune. And having done so, the bride and groom, not to be outdone in hospitality, urged me to accompany them in the bus to be present at their wedding.

We drove out together to the village where Kristinka lived. The auto-bus was a rickety, yellow-painted af-

fair. The women passengers, jealous of their sleeves, ranged themselves carefully along one side. On the top we carried a sack of poppy seed, a wedding present from Kristinka's godmother who had a bake-shop in Kyjov. I wondered if the trip to town for finery had not a more prudent motive behind it.

The village nestled in an embrace of fat hills. Its church stood apart from the double line of white cottages, approached by a steep path through the wheat. The cottages were simple enough but all had quaintly carved window frames and several of these, on the oldest cottages, were painted in designs of tulips and sunflowers. These used to be a feature of eastern Moravia; now alas, not so common, due to the spread of modern ideas.

The wedding took place in the church after the Mass. When the final words had been said the bride and groom passed out of the church door, and down the path preceded by the village fiddler who played a spirited little tune. The bridegroom twirled his moustaches, but Kristinka was overcome with shyness and her free hand fumbled with the lace-edged handkerchief she had prudently affixed to her waist with a large safety pin.

Behind the newly married pair came the guests who included all the village and some cousins who had driven over from another settlement. The priest, who had hurried to take off his vestments, brought up the rear with his small servant carrying his reverence's umbrella.

Tables had been set out in the yard behind the Vacha's house, and the food, dozens of roasted ducks and geese swimming in their own fat, platters of *knedlicky*, and jugs of home-made plum wine, and for a sweet—little dumplings filled with blue plums and sprinkled thickly with coarse sugar. At sight of the viands the fiddler's

pipings took on a gayer tune. He was an old man with a strangely wistful face. The face of one who pipes that others may dance. Just so must Antonin Dvořák, the son of a village butcher, have played for weddings for the sake of a few kreutzers and the goose and dumpling.

And from old men, like this fiddler of Osmanniny, he must have learned the old, old tunes which he later wove into the Slavonic Dances which began his fame. Dvořák, on a hunt for folk music, discovered no fewer than forty dances in the repertoire of the Moravian peasants. Smetana, too, was a son of Moravia. The music of his *Bartered Bride* was inspired by a folk song.

I had a seat of honor with the priest, the school master and his wife at the bride's right hand. The school master was also the head of the village singing society. There is one in each Moravian village. The government is doing all it can to foster the national music and folk song of these people.

We sat down to feast, forty strong, and rose up to dance. The young men and girls, facing each other in couples, formed a wide circle on the hard-packed earth of the yard. They sang as they danced, pirouetting, then leaning to clap each other's hands as in a nursery game, then clasping hands high and twirling under the arch so formed. The girls' red kerchiefs bloomed like a field of poppies. The men's boots stamped out the measure. At the close, as the tune quickened, each man clasped his partner round the waist, lifted her three feet or more in the air, then set her down all in time to the gay fiddling and the words of the song they sang.

The bride was the partner most in demand. It was her day. Gone was her shyness now as she danced with each cousin and neighbor. But the bridegroom, a Bo-

hemian, a townsman and a military man, unfamiliar with these exacting steps, sat quiet. I thought his eyes rested contentedly on the big, well filled hayricks, the geese, the ducks, the long farm wagons and the two horses who hung their heads over the wall to look on. He had in truth come home from the wars.

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The dance was so enthralling that I all but missed the auto-bus on its return trip. I would have done so had not the driver, used to the ways of wedding guests, tooted his horn under the wall for me. It took me back to Kyjov, empty now and missing all its "Scarlet wear."

Luhačovice is the spa of Moravia. Before the War it was an unheralded, dull little watering place, the property of a Hungarian count. True, King Alexander of Serbia had a villa there, the scene of one of those royal scandals in which Balkan history abounds. Ten years ago a Czech doctor bought the spa and developed it. Now thirty thousand visitors come here annually. There are hotels and pensions, and shops, a park with concerts and the famous "baths" and even more famous "inhalatorium." There sufferers from asthma and all nose and throat diseases may inhale the vapor from the mineral springs. You peer through a glass door and see a dozen patients, clad in white rubber coats, sitting in that cleansing mist, inhaling for so many minutes a day under orders.

Though I lunched in a farmyard, I dined that night in state at the Palace Hotel Ortilek. Later I sat on my high balcony and listened to the music of a balalaika orchestra on the terrace below, and watched the harvest moon come up, round and golden over the forested

hill, where old stones remain of the sacrificial altars of the pagan Slavs.

After all, it is in such sharp contrasts as this that a good part of the joy of travelling lies. No one wants farmyards all of the time; nor Palace Hotels. But a judicious admixture of both.

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Luhačovice is the best stopping place from which to explore eastern Moravia. From it one motors comfortably to Uherské Brod and Uherské Hradiště, two old towns dating as their names reveal, from the fifty years of Magyar rule, nearly one thousand years ago. Uherské Brod, (Hungarian Ford) was the birthplace of Comenius. There are still to be seen the house where he was born in 1592, and the school where he was first pupil, then teacher.

Jan Amos Komensky was the last bishop of the Moravian Brethren. Exiled from Moravia after White Mountain, he lived in Poland, in Germany, in Holland and in Sweden. He made a visit to London and was besought by the trustees of Harvard College to come to America as head of that institution. Cotton Mather wrote:

“That brave old man Johannus Amos Comenius, the fame of whose worth hath been Trumpeted as far as more than three Languages could carry it, was agreed withal by our Mr. Winthrop to come over into New England and illuminate this College and Country in the Quality of President. But the solicitations of the Swedish ambassador diverting him another way, that Incomparable Moravian became not an American.”

Not least of the glories attached to his name is the fact that he was the father of children's books. The primers

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Comenius wrote for use in his school and had illustrated are the first illustrated children's books. There are memorials to Comenius in many lands, but none I think which celebrate the great man in this rôle.

Uherské Hradište (Hungarian Castle town) is even more interesting than its neighbor for its quaint fifteenth and sixteenth century houses with high, curiously carved gables and the curving, cobbled-stoned streets where the farm carts pass all day.

There, late in August, a great cattle fair is held. Uherské Hradište's Horse Fair is the yearly event of eastern Moravia. To it come horse lovers from Bohemia, Slovakia and as far away as Poland. During the three days of this Fair, you may see all sorts of costumes.

I wanted very much to see this Fair. But from no one could I get accurate information when it would be held. One told me the last week in August. Another said, "The August Fair is not The Fair. That comes later. In early October."

I can only recommend that a traveller going to Moravia shall start on his first day to make inquiries about the Uherské Hradište Horse Fair, and go on making inquiries until some accurate information is forthcoming.

From Luhačovice, too, I motored to Buchlov Castle. The grey pile rises above the forests that ring the wheat fields round. The road that mounts steeply to its gate is paved with old, old stones. Buchlov dates from the ninth century, before the coming of the Magyars. A Slavic princess Friedigild, is said to have lived here. Her "cave" is pointed out in the oldest foundations of the castle.

The castle hill, seventeen hundred feet high, is covered

with a dense beech wood. Then in September, the gold was showing like warm sunshine through the green. The towering gates, the donjon, and the great castle itself, all of grey stone, were splashed with golden lichens. Altogether a glorious old pile, Buchlov.

Its style is imported from the south. I suspect an architect imported from France. Delicately sculptured windows still glazed with sixteenth century roundels, look away over the forests. They seem all unconscious of the cottages and dove-cotes and out-buildings, all of that golden lichened stone, that crowd within the outer wall and make Buchlov a mediæval walled town in miniature.

The castle is still the family's summer home. They were in residence, and the castellan regretted that I could not be admitted. But he showed me the lime tree which grows out of the courtyard stones and is said to have been planted there upside down, by a poacher. The tree lived and grew and this was accepted as proof that the poacher was more sinned against than sinning. He was let off with only a week in the stocks.

The masters of Buchlov were stern lords and jealous of their preserves. A stone table under the miraculous lime tree was spread with a last meal for other offenders who could cause no proof of their innocence to spring from the stones.

The beech woods stretch away to Velehrad, ten kilometers by road. That day the leaves were already falling gently. We drove down a burnished pathway through the forest. Two old women, bent under bundles of fagots, stepped aside to let us pass. At a cross roads we came on a tall wooden crucifix guarded by two

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lichened stone statues of heroic size—two bearded, high-mitred wise men from the East who brought the Gospel to the Slavs.

Svatopluk, who had his capital at Velehrad in the ninth century, sent to Constantinople to ask for teachers of the "new" faith. He chose to have his Gospel from Byzantium rather than Rome because he dreaded with just cause the Frankish influence of Western Europe. The emperor sent the brothers Cyril and Methodius. They sailed their boat up the Danube and landed somewhere near Nitra in Slovakia. From Nitra, legend says, they walked to Velehrad where the emperor was, blessing the land as they came.

Like Avalon, Velehrad is a place of memories alone. Was Svatoopluk's capital really here, as the Moravians claim? Or at Devin on the Danube? Authorities differ. But the thought of Slavdom declares for the Moravian site. As for me, now that I am here before the great church the Cistercians built over the stones of Svatoopluk's citadel, I hold with the Moravians. Of course it was here.

Of the semi-barbaric magnificence that was razed by the Magyar invaders there remains only one tiny Romanesque chapel. There it is said the brother saints preached and baptized their converts. That chapel is cor cordium of all Slavdom. Here by special dispensation of the Pope, Mass is said each Sunday after the ancient eastern rite and with the old Slavic liturgy. One recalls that chapel in Toledo's cathedral still dedicated to the ritual of the Gothic Christians.

The chapel is rich in gilded icons. Figures of the apostles are painted on the screen which hides the sanctuary. Within the holy doors are the square altar, the

triple cross, the illuminated Gospels, such as are to be found in the Greek Orthodox churches.

I was so fortunate as to have the priest who officiates in this chapel for my guide. He was a Jesuit, a teacher in the school which now occupies the old convent adjoining the church. He did his duty conscientiously by the great church, an eighteenth century baroque basilica. It supported the twelfth century building of the monks of St. Bernard. Of that early church only the apse remains. The outer walls show fine Romanesque pilasters and capitals, good stone work that has outlasted seven centuries.

Within the new church every inch of wall space is covered with frescoes depicting the history of Velehrad, real and legendary. Svatopluk in his glory receiving the missionaries from Byzantium his baptism; the feast at which the King of Bohemia, a guest, but still a pagan, was compelled to sit humbly at the feet of the Christian king of Moravia; whereupon his Bohemian majesty became converted at once and demanded baptism for himself and his nation. The coming of the monks in 1120, and the story of one of their order, who wandered into the forests following a bird song; when he returned, at evening, it was to find strange faces within the familiar white cowls, a new abbot in the chancel, two hundred years having elapsed in what seemed to him one day.

Velehrad is the scene of great pilgrimages on July fifth, the day dedicated to Saints Cyril and Methodius. By coincidence, this is also the birthday of Jan Hus and the national holiday throughout Czechoslovakia. Thousands of devout Slavs from Poland, Serbia, Bosnia, the Ukraine and Russia, as well as from all parts of the republic, gather here on that day. The roads leading to

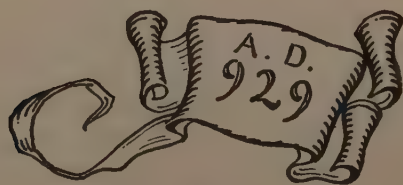
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the shrine are filled with processions and banners and the chant of hymns. The costumes of the peasants from all the Slav countries flood the court before the church with vivid color. And as it was when the faithful of Islam used to gather at the mosque in Cordoba, so at Velehrad the press is too great for the church, the doors are set wide and the square and the fields are crowded with the worshippers.

Many of the votive banners are hung in the church. There is also a Crucifixion, carved of wood and painted, the work of a peasant who brought it to the shrine on his back on the occasion of the eleven hundredth anniversary of the coming of the Saints, in 1927.

Some day I shall come back to Moravia to come to Velehrad on the fifth of July. I want to see Father M——, wearing the full panoply of his Eastern vestments, officiate in that other world, little chapel with the flat, holy icons looking down. I want to see the flood of scarlet pour out of the forest paths and surge between the hedge rows as the Slavs come with banners and with singing to the site of their ancient glory.

And, I want to dandle Kristinka's youngest baby on my knee and hear again Osmaninny's fiddler draw his bow across his strings.



PART II

WITH A RUCKSACK IN SILESIA

“A lie has short legs, it cannot run far.”
Czech proverb

CHAPTER ONE

WITH A RUCKSACK IN SILESIA

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AID G——, “Even if you are glad to be rid of us you might be polite enough to conceal your joy until after we are gone.”

And P——, “The straps of that rucksack are going to cut your shoulders. You’ve never worn one and you don’t know what you are letting yourself in for. You’ll get blisters on your heels after the second day.

You’ll probably catch cold. Who ever heard of an American woman doing a walking tour all by herself in the mountains of Silesia? Who ever heard of Silesia, anyway?”

And I —, “You’re jealous; both of you. You wish you were going, too.”

“Not me,” G—— retorted. “The only walking I do is down the fairway.”

And P——, “I’m going to walk. On all the shopping streets of Vienna. I’m going to buy hats, hats, hats. And bags. And *petit point*. And while we are dining on roast chicken and a salad of fine herbs and *croissants* and ices and little frosted cakes, we shall

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think pityingly of you clambering up and down mountains and staving off the pangs of hunger with sausage and dumplings, *dumplings*, DUMPLINGS."

The adventure was beginning. After all, Bohemia is fairly well trodden ground. But Silesia, and Slovakia, lying waiting on the other side of the Vah, and dark Ruthenia, stretching eastward between Roumania and Poland, all that was sufficiently unknown ground to stir one's zest for adventure. What were mere creature comforts compared with these?

My knowledge of Silesia was pleasantly vague. A long ago Bohemian Princess had taken it to Poland as a marriage dowry, on condition that Poland accept Christianity. Old John the Luxemburger, of whom Europe, gasping, said: "Nothing can be done without the help of God and the King of Bohemia," won it back for the Czechs by forswearing his claim to the Polish crown. His son Charles, the Emperor, safeguarded the transfer by taking the heiress to wife. On at least two occasions Prussia, Russia and Austria had partitioned Silesia among themselves. Frederick the Great appropriated all but three dukedoms which he left Maria Theresa. At the Versailles Conference the snippets were pieced together once more and re-alloted, Austria getting none this time; her old share and a bit more going to new-born Czechoslovakia. It began, the Czechoslovak part of it, in the foothills north of Olomouc, and pushed northward and eastward against the frontiers of Germany and Poland. It was mountainous, romantically wooded, and beautiful and poor and untravelled.

It sounded right for an adventuring foot. True, the Silesians have a bad name among the Slav tribes. Their



OLD PALACES IN OLOMONC



ŠTERNBERK CASTLE WITH THE HUNGER TOWER



THE INN IN WINKELSDORF



THE NECROMANCER AND HIS DAUGHTER

very name is a corruption of *Zlezni*, the Polish word for wicked. It lent no slight zest to the adventure I contemplated to remember Carlyle's interpretation of Silesia as "the country where you get into trouble."

The railroad throws a wide loop around the Hruby Jeseník, the mountain mass, which comprises the northern end of Czechoslovak Silesia. The Tourist Club has marked trails through this, making it possible for a traveller with a rucksack to leave the railroad at a point on one side or the other of the mountains, strike across them and rejoin the railroad after three days or more of walking, at some point on the opposite side of the province.

This I intended to do.

By sending my luggage on by rail to Žilina, the point from which I hoped to explore Slovakia, I should be as free as a rucksack, limited strictly to absolute necessities for five days vagabondage, would allow.

Where the foothills of the Jeseník march down to meet the Moravian plain stands the castle of Sternberk. It is only just big enough and frowning enough to qualify in the fortress class. For the rest, its red-roofed farmsteads crowd close about the walls, its terrace flowers with potted plants, silver winged doves bill and coo on the battlements of its grim, round, white tower—the *Hungerthurm* where the owners of Sternberk died of slow starvation rather than yield to the besieging Wittenberg—and on that day when I climbed the lane from the village and knocked on its gate, a scent of fresh baked *vanochy* was wafted from the kitchen on the doorstep of which two small and chubby children sat and munched a curranty cake.

The Cardinal Prince Dietrichstein bought in the castle at the general auction of the estates of Bohemian and Moravian nobles after White Mountain. It served His Highness as a convenient country retreat from whose terrace, of a clear morning, he could look away down the plain to the onion domes of Olomouc. A series of marriages brought the old Dietrichstein holdings to the princely family of Lichtenstein with its one hundred and sixty thousand hectares of field and forest. Now Sternberk is one of the twenty-four landed estates which, in addition to the principality of the name, make Prince Lichtenstein the peer of, indeed superior to, many kings.

As you go through the castle's chapel and upper rooms, that are filled with rare and beautiful fifteenth and sixteenth century furnishings — only a small part of the treasures which filled a whole palace in the Street of Princes in Vienna — you have the feeling that you are walking in a fairy tale. This is the enchanted castle from which the owners have been spirited away, and which waits through the centuries for their return. The clocks tick solemnly; the great carved beds are spread with fresh linen. In the tiled stoves fires are laid ready for a spark from the tinder box. Nothing anywhere suggests the museum or the show place. The Prince might at any moment be returning from the hunt.

In each apartment are beautiful things to linger over. But none more precious, none more moving, than the Head of Christ by Lucas Cranach which hangs over the prince's bed, so arranged that, to one kneeling at the bedside, the figure seems to lean from its frame with infinite and divine compassion.

The last Prince Lichtenstein restored Sternberk after several centuries of ruin. He came to the title

two years before Lincoln took the oath of office and died only last year. He never married and his estates, still vast despite the post-war taxings and land seizures, passed to a nephew. "And do you know," the castellan's voice sank to a whisper as he regaled me with this morsel of family gossip, "the new Prince, he had never married, either. Perhaps that was because he knew how *der alter* felt about women. But no sooner is he *Furst*, than he finds him a wife. Though he is old, mark you. More than seventy. And what do you think? The lady he marries, well — not so old as he; *eini Grafyn, aber ja*, but not young! Not beautiful. What a waste, one would say, when one is Prince and might have everything."

The railroad that carries you northward into the Hruby Jeseník is a pleasantly ruminative line of travel which does all things moderately and stops now and again to philosophize. Most of the stops are at isolated stations. These combine a dwelling for the station master and his family, a ticket window and a room where travellers may camp between trains that are sometimes a day apart.

Presumably there are villages somewhere about, reached by the line of white road that winds upward into the hills, but they do not obtrude on the green landscape. Gardens of bright flowers, a pen of chickens, a pig or two, keep the railroad representative occupied between trains. Your arrival brings the station master and his family hospitably to the door, the agent hastily dons his long military cape of dark blue cloth with the magenta collar that marks his official dignity. The conductor joins him, they shake hands, and chat pleasantly

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while the slow transfer of peasants and bundles out of and into the train goes forward. They inspect the gardens and the chickens; they poke investigating sticks at the pigs' fatness; they discuss the price of sausage and the best of all possible ways for the making of head cheese.

When at last the guard blows a melancholy blast on his horn, the two shake hands again, the conductor mounts to the platform of the only second class carriage — there is no first — the agent stands stiffly at attention, saluting, and the train puffs away.

The signs at all these Silesian stations are put up in two languages, Czech and German. Of course, the railroad is government owned and operated and the railroad officials and even minor employees throughout the republic are Czechs, this being one major cause of grievance which the Slovaks hold against the Prague government. But here in Silesia, German, at least the Silesian dialect of it, is the tongue of the people.

The Hruby Jesenik piles up in a rolling green mass which begins in sloping pastures, mounts to a forested ridge, to be topped by peaks that lift smooth alpine meadows against the blue. So Kepernik, more than forty-five hundred feet high, rears its cropped green head above the dark forest growth. To these sky pastures the herds are driven. There they graze all summer guarded by young boys and are brought down through the forests to the valley villages when autumn nears.

Down in the valley, where the railroad winds, it was already dusk. The cool sweetness of the mountain evening came down the glen. But on Kepernik's crest the last, far-away sunlight blazed on the windows of the refuge, like a beacon fire.

I had determined on Fryvaldov on the northern slope of the Hruby Jeseník for a starting point. North of Fryvaldov the lands fall away to German Silesia. Southward and eastward the mountain mass rises to its highest peak — Praeden. Innumerable Silesian folk songs and legends celebrate this “Old Father of Mountains,” from whose frowns storms are born. My route, marked in unmistakable red ink on the Tourist Club’s map of the region, would take me over it and down on the southwestern slope along the valley lands of the Oder to Krnov.

Fryvaldov lies cupped in smooth green meadow lands. Dairy farms and the white buildings of the various sanatoria, which make this a popular health resort, dot the rolling hills. Through the cup runs a little stream. Long ago lords of the manor widened it to form a moat about a tiny green isle on which they built their comfortable castle. There is just room for four grey walls and four grey towers and a very narrow space of flowers. A tablet over the gate declares it to have been the home of one “Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf.” Who Carl Ditters was, and wherein lies his claim to a bronze immortality, no one I encountered could tell me.

“*Ein graf,*” they said, and shrugged as though the story went no further.

It is curious in very old and little visited settlements like this how completely personalities are absorbed into the common heritage. Not only do men’s bodies return to the dust from whence they sprang, but their deeds, their fame for good or ill, their very names, go back into unrecorded history, as the leaves of the forest fall to become the mould on which the standing oaks are fed.

That is what you feel in these communities. Not the

arresting presence of a few Titans, but a rich patina of lives lived long before, a continuous life stream flowing through the generations, *grafs* and peasants, all of one race, of one tribe, even of one blood — so closely have unions blessed and unblessed knit the countryside into a whole.

A pile of rucksacks on the stone-paved passage of Fryvaldov's Inn of the Emperor, the clatter of knives on plates and the hum of many voices in many tongues told that others beside myself were on the road. The inn's common room was thick with smoke and kitchen steam. A score or more diners sat at the bare, wooden tables served by the landlord, stout and perspiring in his shirt sleeves. And P—— had spoken truly. There *was* sausage. There *was* dumpling.

By nationality the guests were German, Czech and Polish. There were two or three married couples and one party of three women together. The rest were young men in the very short, khaki "shorts" and fancy woolen stockings with dangling tassels and Malvolio garters that are the garb of German clerks on a holiday. Their walking sticks were ornamented with silver badges engraved with the names of mountains scaled or districts tramped over on former holidays. One of these sticks covered with silver from crook to ferrule is a prized possession in many German and Bohemian middle class households.

Supper over, they took their pipes into the open, lounging about the inn door. Meanwhile, the market square, which at supper time had been empty, came alive. The village girls walked there in twos and threes. Up and down they passed before the shuttered shop

fronts . . . past that group at the inn door. . . . There was a turning of heads. . . . Youth to youth. . . . Here was a ritual older than any dance, a ritual in which the dance began.

As though at some piping strain, unheard by any but the dancers themselves, the groups merged, to fall apart into smaller groupings . . . men and maids together now, six and eight abreast, they paced the stone-paved square.

Again the signal. The measure changed. The groups paired into couples, the couples moved away down the side streets . . . the square was deserted.

Along the lanes and the sedgy banks of Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf's castle moat, men and maids wandered arm in arm; while the valley, lifted like a cup between the hills, was filled with the heady wine of night.

My room stretched across the rear of the inn over the stable yard. It was reached by a long passage with sloping walls and through the lightless, airless chamber where the grandmother of the house made her bed among mangles, piles of linen and extra feather *deck*.

My first impression of my own room was as a store house of discarded furniture. Four beds, each of generous size, filled the corners. The space between these was set out with a sofa and chairs upholstered in red plush, several marble top tables, two wardrobes, a minute, apologetic washstand, and a massive tiled stove with Bible verses in German script running around the cornice.

Scarcely was I in bed than a rattling and a knocking called me to open the door. It was the old grandmother. She stood there in her flannel night garment with a plaid

shawl about her shoulders and holding a candle. She motioned me to get back into bed and she came and stood over me, cupping the candle flame with her hand. Her shadow, hunched and monstrous, loomed on the plaster wall.

She had come to warn me; on no account must I lock my door.

"But why?" I demanded.

"Because of the other beds." Surely I did not think for sixteen Czechish crowns to occupy the whole of the inn's largest and finest chamber to the exclusion of other guests?

"Do you mean that these other beds are taken?"

Not yet. But at any moment they might be. Of course, the hour was now late. No more travellers might come that night. But if more did arrive demanding beds, as for the lining of her sou's pockets she hoped they would, they must sleep here. The three beds and the vacant pillow beside my own were the only sleeping places left in the house. Let *die dame* go to sleep again, as God willed. But leaving the door unlocked. And when others came, as they passed her pallet, she would bid them step softly and speak low, not to waken *eine Fremde* who slept in the far, left corner bed, and who had come far that day and had far to go on the morrow.

I promised and she withdrew. The door remained unbolted. The seven pillows awaited the seven sleepers who might come.

O Mercury, god of travellers and of inn keepers, to which of us will you give ear tonight?

Mine must have been the more fervent prayer for the seven sleeping places remained unfilled. The Inn of the Emperor lost a possible one hundred and twelve crowns, and the Stranger who had far to go slumbered undis-

turbed till dawn in the luxury of a room and a bed to herself.

The road next morning headed for adventure. The sun shone, a little wind ran along the fields of rye and barley, overhead great fleecy clouds sailed like galleons. The spirit of the morning was upon me as I crossed the bridge beyond the village and set my face toward the hills.

When you become a traveller afoot, it is amazing what changes happen to your point of view. Your observations take on a minuteness the motorist never knows. To him, spinning godlike over the hard white road, nothing less than an acre of buttercups will suffice to yield an ounce of gold.

Only the traveller afoot knows the secrets of the grass, the silken sound of the wind's passing, the delicate nuances of scent and color, the lucky chance of a fringed blue gentian beside a mustard-lichened rock.

Too, the motorist is removed from the life of the countryside. He observes, but he is not of it. He descends upon fair crowds and harvestings, scatters them and in a moment is gone. The impressions he gathers are episodal, mere running flashes.

In Thomas Bailey Aldrich's "Story of a Bad Boy," it is told how the Boy on his first journey sees through the train window two lads squaring to a fight behind a barn. He sees one draw off and deliver the first blow; sees the other duck, steady himself, clench his fist, hit out. . . . And then the angle of the barn shoots forward, halts the blow in midair. The boys, the barn, the field, the landscape speed away and the Boy is left remembering, all his life wondering about that second blow.

That is what happens to the motorist continually.

The impressions he gathers have no replies. Like that second blow, they are left hanging in midair. Before they can be rounded into significance the observer is a mile down the road and half a score of new impressions have succeeded them.

It is only when you are afoot that you can linger and eavesdrop, suiting your pace to the occasion; that you can lean on gates and watch the turn of the plough, can see the bucket rise brimming from the well, can glimpse through open cottage doors the occupations of a morning.

Nor is it only your point of view that undergoes a change. You, yourself, once you take to the road in the vagabond sense, assume quite another significance to the folk among whom you journey. The motorist is a being of another clay than theirs. He is Juggernaut. Whether envied, dreaded, cursed or placated, he is of another creation. The traveller afoot meets the countryside on terms of equality. He, too, measures the miles in aches and blisters. Yet not on equal terms. These men swinging their scythes in among the bearded barley, these women standing at the cottage doors who survey you across the flowers, are clothed in the unassailable dignity of house owners. You, passing their gates, are a wayfarer and a sojourner of unknown antecedent and dubious destiny. By twisting the circumstances, it is theirs to stare at you, as the motorists stare at them.

With thoughts such as these I filled the first mile or two along the country road through Adelsdorf and Philipsdorf. My map, printed in German, gave only the German village names. In the fields the reapers were

whetting their scythes, men and girls stood ready to cradle the grain. On a low meadow by the stream, older women had cut the flax and were spreading it to dry. A cart rattled by. It was painted bright blue and filled with reapers. Their long wooden rakes and primitive wooden shovels bristled above their heads. Then another cart passed me. A dog was in the shafts and riding in the cart a piteous young calf. The woman who walked beside it gave me a pleasant greeting, "*Guten tag.*"

The cottages of stone, whitewashed, with overhanging upper stories, had their shingle roofs drawn down low over their bowed windows. Silesian winters are long and cruel. And the roofs themselves were safeguarded against Praeded's moodiness by sizeable boulders placed on the corners. The door yards were bright with flowers; dark blue tall spikes of monkshood and phlox, whose homely fragrance called the bees, and brave crimson cockscomb. And set in the midst of the flowers before each cottage was a tiny shrine. In some cases it was no more than a bright oleograph of the Virgin, in others a tiny figure guarded behind glass, but spruce garlands wreathed it and some guttered candle ends showed that, after dark, lights flowered there, lighting the night traveller, too. The Silesians are very devout. St. Adalbert carried Christianity into these mountain villages at the close of the tenth century. From here he went on his missionary journey to the Prussians and met martyrdom at their hands.

Beyond Philipsdorf, a granite shaft marked the site of an engagement in the World War. I sat on the grass before it and watched two other wayfarers coming down the road toward me. These were a man and a small

girl. The man walked with the plodding gait that told me, before I saw the child's hand laid on his arm, that he was blind. Slung from a strap about his shoulders was a concertina. Both were ragged and dust covered, a drab pair, but for one exotic touch—on the man's shoulder perched a blue and crimson parrot.

I knew the man for one of the blind ballad singers who frequent markets and saint's day gatherings. They draw a crowd with their songs and then, the audience gathered, proceed to a few simple tricks of sleight of hand, or fortune telling, which draw the coppers from pockets.

The child, after all, was in the way of Nature. But the bird? Here, in the very center of Central Europe, thousands of miles from tropic isles and liana-hung jungles. Could that, too, be dismissed as an act of God?

The child had made my presence known. The necromancer came and stood before me and I saw that his stock in trade beside the concertina was a stack of printed fortunes. "Your future for a crown." I dropped the coin into his cup and he began forthwith to shuffle the slips, in nimble, dirty fingers. He was by way of being an artist. He shuffled and tossed them with the air of summoning the gods of chance to his aid, while the child waited drearily and the parrot held himself aloof and disdainful. Then he laid out seven of the papers on the top of the concertina. The parrot, still supercilious of the whole vagabond business, hopped from his perch and stepped delicately along the concertina surveying the array. One folded slip he picked up in his beak. I took it. The oracle had spoken.

When the necromancer and his daughter had gone on I unfolded the paper. It was printed in seven languages

—Czech, Slovak, German, Polish, Magyar, Russian and Hebrew. I chose the German version to decipher: "*Life will hold for you many untoward events. Be not overhasty. Keep your own counsel and look for opportunity to come with the new moon. The purposes of God are inscrutable.*"

From Philipsdorf the path began to mount steeply the bulging wall of the valley. It was smooth with old sheep pastures and threaded by zigzag foot tracks. High up where the forests began grew thickets of huckleberries. The pickers were at work among them. Their voices and the tinkle of the herd bells came down to me.

I was climbing Cervena Hora. Above rose the ridge, not craggy, but stretching in a long, forested line straight across the sky. These forests are part of the Silesian wealth of Prince Lichtenstein. There are vast tracts where the woodsman's axe has never rung, where man has never obtruded his hand in God's design. But on this side of Cervena Hora a flume had been cut down the hill side. A thin trickle of water was all that ran over its stones now, but the scarred stone walls told the story of the Spring logging floods. Along its edge, where the trees had been cut away, blazed the fire weed. From its ardent masses rose the tall pale candles of wild foxgloves.

After an hour's steep climb, the path came out on the saddle of Cervena Hora. There was a tourist rest and a restaurant with a radio trumpeting the music from The Cafe of All Nations in Berlin. There, a number of my fellow guests at the Inn of the Emperor, who had taken the trail before me that morning, were replenishing themselves with stewed goat and cranberries.

The Pass of Cervena Hora is a crossing of the trails.

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From here they lead westward along the curving ridge-pole to the pilgrimage shrine of Our Lady of the Red Hill. Twice a year the valley folk mount the paths to this lonely hermitage. They come with banners and singing, and their votive candles twinkle through the forest like glowworms.

My path dropped swiftly down the south slope of the ridge. Where it twisted about some outcropping rock, you looked straight away down the mountain side to a deep lonely dell where a glimmer of a stream shone through the trees. High up, over the crevass, an eagle wheeled superbly in the clear air.

So lonely was it, so majestic in its Wagnerian grandeur, that I was startled to hear from somewhere not far off the strains of a barrel organ. Around a bend of the path I came on the lone minstrel. It was an old woman. Her withered cheeks had fallen inward from the curve of her head kerchief, leaving her nose and chin to protrude like the beak of a gaunt bird. She squatted with her organ on a slight rise of ground from which she could look for some distance both up and down the path. Her instrument had but two tunes. But they sufficed. When she pulled the handle out the mechanism tinkled the seductive cadences of the Barcarolle from the Tales of Hoffman. When she pushed the handle in, the forest aisles resounded to the Dead March from Saul.

She showed a nice philosophy in her choice of these. When she saw a pilgrim mounting the slope, feeling the blood pounding in his ears and the rucksack heavy on his back, she quickly pulled out the handle that his spirit might be restored to lightness by the Barcarolle. While a traveller like me, coming boldly down hill with self-confident step was reminded of the stern realities of life

and the assurance of upgrades to come by the solemn chords of the Dead March.

Winkelsdorf trails a thread of cottages through the valley. Behind each whitewashed dwelling stretches a tiny orchard with a row of beehives and a diminutive garden. Then the trees begin again. The forest crowds man close. It peers in at his windows and throws its sombre shadow over his birth and his youth, his work, his love and his final half hour of aged ease. Then, when that too is over, they carry him back to it, to the tiny graveyard with the Calvary, that is cut into the forest and guarded by it on three sides. They leave him there within its arms. Perhaps that is what the forest has been waiting for.

The inn at Winkelsdorf was only a double cottage with a green spruce bough set over the door to proclaim it a public house. I had a clean, bare little room, watched over by the pictures of four saints. A stone trough in the garden side of the inn with a brook running through it, and a bit of mirror hung up on a pear tree, sufficed for cleanliness.

Two other walkers rested there that night, a man and his wife. They introduced themselves as Jaromir and Feril Kuba. Both were teachers in a school in Přerov. They had come that day from Rozova, crossing Cervená Hora before me. They too were going on in the morning over Praeded.

We sat after supper on the bench beside the inn door and watched the day bloom and die over the forest. My companions were openly curious about my solitary vagabondage.

"Have you ever been in Slovakia?"

"Never."

"Ah! Your parents were Slovaks then?"

"No."

"But . . ." Feril demanded suspiciously, "then why do you wish to go there?"

"Is it not very beautiful?" I said.

"Beautiful . . . ? Yes. You will go to the High Tatras. There are fine large hotels. And the Baths at Piešťany and Trenčianske Teplice. Many, many tourists go there. And at Dobsina there is a cavern all of ice. Ages ago the mountain split open and the ice got in. Then the mountain closed again. All but a tiny crack. And there the ice remains. You can go into it, down into the bowels of the mountain. That is nice, too."

"You do not understand," I said. "All those places you mention. . . . Well, perhaps I shall go to them. But what I really want to see are the villages, the costumes and the life of the people. I want to see the harvest dances and the religious pilgrimages. . . ."

Feril pursed her lips. Jaromir shook his head.

"Slovakia is not like Bohemia," he said. "Not like Silesia. The Slovaks are very backward. The Magyars who were their masters have a saying: 'A Slovak is not a man.' They are ignorant and superstitious. . . ."

Then he told this story:

"You know the Wilson Station in Prague where the express trains come in? I was there one day, and I saw some country women. They were Slovaks. They had on their great embroidered puffed sleeves and their high leather boots, and their head dresses trimmed with tinsel flowers and ribbons. They came and stood on the steps of the station and looked at the street. You know what



PRAEDED'S TOWER KEEPS THE MEMORY OF PAGAN SACRIFICES



THE SLOVAK BLACK FELT HAT IS CAPABLE OF AS MANY
MOODS AS THE GYPSY'S VIOLIN

the traffic is in the *Wilsonova ulice*? So many *drožkas* and taxicabs, so many people all coming and going at once. What with all that and the big buildings and the noise, you could see the peasant women did not know what to make of it. Well, across the street in a little garden, there is a statue of your American President, Dr. Wilson. The women looked at it. Then they went over there and they knelt down in front of the statue and said some prayers. And one of them put flowers at the feet. Then they got up and went away quite calmly.

"You see," he went on, "those people live still as their grandmothers and great-grandmothers lived. The Magyars did not give them any schools. Until we Czechs built schools for them, they had no way of being educated. They had not even the teachers for the schools when they were built. And they object to the law which says they must send their children to school. They are not like the Czechs who value education above all things."

It is true no people in Europe today have set the value on education that the Czechs give to it. Who but they would place the degree "University Professor" before the "President" of their chief executive's title? I remembered a statue I had seen somewhere of "General Dr. Stefanik." I had read too of the valiant pioneer work the Republic is doing along educative lines in Slovakia and Ruthenia.

Therefore, I chose my words with care.

"Sometimes," I said, "there are things which poor and oppressed peoples create for themselves . . . music and poetry and legends and art, that are quite spontaneous and very beautiful. And when education comes,

these things die away. People build museums for the little bits that are left. The places in the world where any of these things remain are very, very few. Soon they will all be gone. . . ."

"But knowledge is better . . ." the two Czechs spoke as one.

The innkeeper had come out and joined us while Jaromir was speaking. Now he took the pipe from his mouth.

"I think I know what *die gnadigste* means," he said. And he told us the story of Magdalena Bohn.

There lived in Winkelsdorf a widow who had one daughter, Magdalena. The girl was very beautiful. When a child she was always chosen to lead the procession when the villagers went up the mountain to the shrine of Our Lady of the Red Hill.

As she ripened into womanhood, her beauty became more of a legend than a known fact for she was seldom seen about. The mother guarded her jealously. When the widow went with the other women to work in the fields, Magdalena stayed at home. People saw her moving about the orchard and the bees, she worked their bit of garden and, as you passed along the road, you could just see her through the open door of the cottage, spinning, or working at the loom.

It was the widow, not Magdalena, who went to market.

In fact, the only place the poor girl went was to church. And then what with her mother staying close at her side and her kerchief drawn so far forward, and hanging her head so shyly, one saw only the line of her cheek and the whiteness of her brow over the eyes.

Perhaps because she was so quiet and so good, as well

as being said to be beautiful, at least three of the young men of Winkelsdorf wanted to marry her . . . Vilem and Karel, who were woodsmen, and Alois, who was son to the owner of this very inn . . . *and he, but for what I am going to tell you, would have been innkeeper here today. I am a Bruntal man from the other side of Praeded. All this happened before my time.*"

Each one of the three, finding no chance to get a word with the girl herself, spoke to the mother. But the widow would have none of them. Her daughter, she said, was not to marry. Marriage was all well enough for some, but for Magdalena . . . No!

So the talk went round the village that the widow Bohn was saving her daughter's beauty for some *graf*. The priest took it upon his cloth to remonstrate.

"Is not my daughter a good girl?" the widow demanded.

His reverence agreed that she was.

"But," he reminded the widow, "all young people need a bit of diversion. Magdalena should go out more. She should marry. . . ."

The widow shook her head. Not Magdalena.

"Why then?" asked his reverence. "Did she have a vocation?"

No! Magdalena was no nun. All that she asked was to be left alone to pursue her own quiet life. His reverence must understand it was the girl's own choice.

The priest shook his head and gave it up.

Vilem and Karel soon took their hearts elsewhere. But Alois, the innkeeper's son, found no other sweetheart.

From the time long before man can remember, Winkelsdorf has kept a festival on St. John's Day, the twenty-

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first of June. There is a High Mass and a procession with banners around the fields where the crops are showing well, and later a feast in which all the village joins and dancing afterward.

"Some say," the innkeeper explained, "*that the priests originated it to keep the people from going up on Praeded the way their ancestors used to do on the day when the sun lasts longest, to sacrifice to the gods for a good harvest.*"

On the day before the feast, the innkeeper sent to the Widow Bohn to ask her to help in the kitchen on the feast day. Many guests from other villages were expected and there would be the musicians, too. The dance would last until nearly morning.

On the day of the feast, the widow left early. Magdalena went to church with the rest of the village. Afterward she went home, alone.

Toward sunset, when the merrymaking was at its height, when the inn was full and there was much work in the kitchen, Alois went down the road to the widow's cottage. Over the fence he could see Magdalena moving about in the orchard. She wore no kerchief and the thick golden braid hung over her shoulder. He opened the gate and went in. She stood and waited for him under the pear trees.

And then . . . there was no one to watch, no one to tell clearly what it was Alois saw to make him cry out and step backward and, weeping like a child, stumble back to the inn. There he packed his things and, while the dancing was going on, he walked over Praeded down to Bruntal where the railroad comes. And he never came back. A calico seller who came that way told of having seen Alois in Prague. He was working in a shop

there. Though he was a young man his hair was white as snow.

But that came afterward.

From that twenty-first of June, Magdalena was seen no more. She worked no more in the garden, nor at the loom. She did not go to church. She lay on the bed in the corner of the kitchen. On All Souls' Eve, when the people were lighting the lanterns on the graves, she died.

The widow opened her cottage for the funeral. Everyone came, as much out of curiosity as to share the mother's sorrow. But when they drew near to the bier, when they gazed on that still, white face, they fell back strangely silenced by something greater than Death.

For, you see, they knew that face quite well. It was the same that blessed them from the altar of Our Lady of the Red Hill.

"Of course, all this happened before my time," the innkeeper disclaimed personal responsibility for the tale. "I heard it when I came into the valley. The old owner of the inn sold out. His son had no wish to come back here. As for Magdalena Bohn, you can see her grave up there," he jerked a thumb toward the village cemetery where the tall white Calvary loomed against the dark forest. "It's usual for betrothed couples to visit it and lay a few flowers on the cross. It is said, too, that if a girl wants a husband, she has only to light a candle in Magdalena Bohn's grave lantern on St. John's Day and he is sure to come."

In the morning, the landlord cast a weatherwise eye toward Praeded. Wisps of mist were rising up the mountain side. "They will come down again in rain about noon," he said.

But he was no closer to the truth than other weather prophets I have known elsewhere. We had not been an hour on the road before the last trail of fog vanished, the sun shone full and hot on our backs and drew the perfume from the spruce forests. The road out of the village was bordered on either side by ash trees, the sacred Tree of Life which the Slavs brought with them in their exile from the Baltic. The berries flamed along the paths leading up the hill where the sons of Samo, the Chief, worshipped the old gods.

All morning we climbed, mounting the wooded steep of Little Praeded, with Great Praeded looming still beyond and still higher. Its bald craggy peak with the watch tower at the summit craned over the lesser, forested hills.

Feril and Jaromir were both expert walkers. Each summer they took their holiday in a different section of the country. And for a fortnight they walked. In the fifteen years of their marriage they had tramped over all the mountains that border Bohemia north and west and south. This was their first attack on Silesia.

"It is the way to travel," they said enthusiastically.

I quoted, putting the phrases into awkward German, Stevenson's summing up of a holiday: ". . . to travel for travel's sake. The great affair is to move, to leave this feathered civilization, to feel the earth sharp underfoot. Even a holiday must be worked for. . . ."

"Stevenson, I do not know him," Jaromir said. "You say he is an Englishman. I must find him out. But we Czechs have a great poet Jaroslav Vrchlicky. Do you know him?"

I said that I had seen mementoes of him at Domažlice where he died. "In the town museum there they have

set up his bedroom, exactly as it was on the day of his death. There is his invalid chair, his medicine bottles, his warming pan. It is horrible. Is a poet to be remembered by his pill boxes?"

"No, No!" Jaromir protested hotly. "Vrchlicky least of all. He was a vigorous spirit. Think! He is the author of one hundred volumes of verses. There is one poem of his, 'The Death of Marco Polo.'"

He stopped in the path and began to recite. The long, sonorous lines without rhyme, nor needing any, for that inevitable accent on the first syllable of each word which marks the Czech tongue, flowed majestically.

"But I will translate," he broke off abruptly —

"To behold and know
With one's own eyes the distant ample lands
And oceans, plains and star tracks of the skies,
And divers folk, their habit, usage, gods,
This, too, availeth something, and hath charm."

We took a long rest after we had conquered Falkenstein, lying at ease in the shade on a springy carpet of spruce needles, while we ate the lunch the landlord had put up for us and some chocolate.

"Do they have chocolate in America?" Feril asked.

Her questions revealed an idea of America and American life as interpreted by the studio of Hollywood; a land whose inhabitants rushed about in long, high-powered motor cars; where the ladies were seductively beautiful and even more seductively dressed; and where cities of

AUTHOR'S NOTE; Jaromir gave me the lines in German. The translation of them which appears above is an English rendering made by the English authority on Slavonic literature, Paul Selver.

skyscrapers filled with night clubs and jazz bands dotted a vast range, otherwise peopled by wild cattle, Indians, rattlesnakes and fearsome-looking cowboys . . . but oh, with what gallant and tender hearts!

The forests run up Praeded to within a half mile or so of its crest. On the forest trail it had been still, like same vast dim cathedral in which, strangely, we were the only worshippers. We walked silently, single file, and our steps on the soft mosses made no sound, left no trace. There was something symbolic about that. That swift eradication of our footsteps from that old, old path. But when the forest thinned and we emerged on the rough high meadow with its outcroppings of rock, of a sudden the wind swooped upon us. We were buffeted, harried, forced to use every ounce of energy in the upward climb. The grass was slippery under foot; the stones, worn sharp with exposure, cut our feet. The spirit of Praeded resented us. Who were we, to come without offerings to that peak whose stones had drunk the blood of a thousand pagan sacrifices?

From the summit a tall tower watches over the meeting of three nations — Czechoslovakia, Germany and Poland. We found places against it, away from the wind's reach, and looked out over a tossing green sea of mountain tops. In the hollows between those heavy combers lay villages, but the clefts were too deep, the mountain sides pressed together too closely for them to be visible to us. Only looking away down the gentler, eastern slope of Praeded, we saw the red-roofed, white chalets of the little spa, Karlova Studanka. It is a region rich in legends of the days before history became too exact. Memories of unruly times linger in the names of innocent-looking settlements — Battle Village, Twitch-

cloak and Devil's Bush, Rymarov, "Roman's town," stands on the site of a citadel where Caesar's legions battled against the Quadi.

A cycle of thirteenth century *contes* tells of three dukes who came hunting the stag in these forests. They were lost, separated and wandered for many days having various adventures. One came to the hill not far from Bruntal which is called Venusina Sopka. That is to say, the Venusberg, where is the crater of an extinct volcano. In that mountain, his adventures were the strangest and most wonderful of them all. That was Tannhauser. The tale was sung and told in these parts for five centuries before Wagner immortalized it for the world.

"When at last they found each other," so Jaromir rounded the tale for me, "there they built a city which to this day is called Tesin, which means rejoicing. It lies on the border of Poland; in fact, the city itself is in Poland, though the railroad and station are on Czechoslovakian soil."

Not all the solemn chords of the Dead March could have lessened the exultation of coming down Praeded. The proud sense of accomplishment, of the height won, the lightening of the rucksack on your shoulders, the feeling that the earth itself was running under your feet, helping you on to the inn at the end of the day.

Karlova Studanka is a popular little spa. But fortunately the Czechs are used to tourists afoot. We drew no more than a passing glance as we came down the wide street between the villas and the bath establishments. It gave us, not only a brisk, modern little hotel very clean and eager to please, but a dip in its medicinal waters and supper on a terrace with an orchestra playing a Slovak folk-song whose wailing cadences seemed to

hold all the heartache and longing and wild of all the world's lovers, and a wild regret.

Feril, perhaps to prove to me that ideals of progress and education and a passion for politics unequalled by any people, except the Irish, has not killed the romance in the Czech soul, gave me the words:

"Olweide. Olweide, the wanderer's tune;
Don't marry, young man, or you'll rue the day soon.
What luck has a husband with wife and with home?
There are maids fair as this one wherever you roam.
Stick the rosemary sprig in your bonnet, young man,
Be off over the hills as fast as you can.

The rosemary sprig I've thrown into the dust,
The red rose I'm wearing; in that is my trust.
For rovers, rosemary; for true lovers the rose . . .
Anicka's my darling, I don't care who knows."

We were astir early next morning. Feril and Jaromir had a long day's tramp ahead of them for they were turning north at Würbenthal, to make their way up the Black Oppa toward Freiwaldov. We had agreed to journey together as far as Würbenthal, a distance of some seven miles.

From Karlova Studanka our path led down a gentle little valley where a young river hurried to the growing-up point. I was grateful for the downward slope. Another of P——'s prophecies had come true — there was a blister. While Feril and Jaromir stepped forth as sturdily as though this were their first and not their fourth day afoot, I sought out the soft sides of the path and favored my left heel.

We were descending into the Jagerndorf Duchy, a beautiful blue world of hills, ridge piled on ridge; fruitful valleys lapped in them like this one we were following, with grim stone castles of the ancient Order of German Knights who once administered this corner of Silesia set on crags looking down the vales.

Blue chicory grew along the edge of the way between the path and the fields of flax. Road-watcher is the flower's name in these parts, where the story is told of a maiden deserted by her lover who sat by the roadside waiting for him. So long did she wait and watch there that at last she took root. The wide blue flowers of the chicory are her eyes still watching.

The path threaded tiny hamlets. Like the cottage gardens on the other side Praeded, these, too, were filled with flowers and among the cockscomb and asters and dahlia were set stakes, each with a glittering red, or pink, or purple glass ball atop like Christmas tree ornaments.

In all these out-of-the-way villages, one is struck by the number of cretins one sees. Every settlement has one or two. They sit on benches under the lee of some sunny wall and hold out twitching palms for the alms for which they have not speech to ask. Local superstition lays the cause of cretinism to the waters of certain springs. In days not too far gone these unfortunates were regarded not as objects of pity but as buffoons. The Hapsburg princes used to keep one or two at court as objects of amusement and ridicule and this custom held on in the Hapsburg domains. Cretins were kept at the village inns to provide travellers with butts for their mirth.

I parted from my companions at Würbenthal. I sat on the bench outside the inn there and waved them on

their way back into the mountains. The blister had conquered. I got the railway guide out of my rucksack and began to look up trains to Krnov, Jagerndorf. There was one at two that afternoon. And from Krnov, next morning, I could go on to Žilina.

Then with difficulty I set to work to explain to the inn-keeper's wife, who dandled a rosy baby on her knee, that the patent rubber pacifier which she regarded with much pride as a modern scientific invention and kept jealously in the baby's mouth, was neither scientific, nor modern, nor American.

There is a glorious work awaiting some modern crusader who will travel through Czechoslovakia and jerk all the pacifiers out of all the babies' mouths. Melted in one of the great furnaces at Morava Ostrava, I venture to say that sufficient rubber would result to provide every automobile in the Republic with a spare tire.



PART III

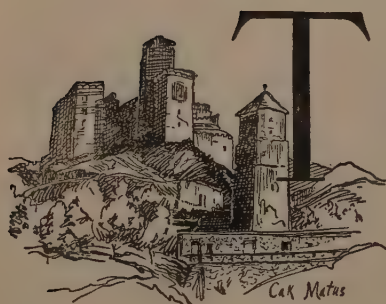
THE WONDERLAND OF SLOVAKIA

“Where there’s a Slovak, there is song;
Where there’s a Magyar, strife and grief;
Where there’s a German, a lover untrue;
Where there’s a gypsy, there is a thief.”

— Slovak proverb.

CHAPTER ONE

CASTLES ON THE VAH



THE Vah is a gypsy among rivers. It wanders out of the snow-filled crevasses of the High Tatras, swings westward watering the lush valley that divides the stark and spectacular Vysoké Tatry from the gentler, more romantic, green forested Nizka Tatry, draws to itself the quick-running Orava and the lazier Likava, cleaves a deep and twisted gorge between the rocky heights that are guarded by the castles of the Two Brothers, who hated each other across the narrow chasm, and comes out smiling into the wide sandy amphitheatre where Žilina guards the gateway to the Slovak Wonderland.

A little west of Žilina the river goes, then quickly changes its mind. It turns a sharp right angle and hastens away southward forming, with its attendant lulls, the boundary line between Moravia and Slovakia. At Komarno it joins fortunes with the Danube and flows on to find its ultimate destiny in the Black Sea.

That vagabond stream brings the Carpathian forests to the Balkans. The mighty pine logs, twenty at a time,

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are lashed together to form triangular rafts. Two men to a raft, river-wise, pole the clumsy craft through the rapids, keep it in the narrow current that sweeps through the gorge of Kralovany and under Likava's castle wall where the rock cress and the rose campion blossom from the stones that once sheltered the adventurous Emerich Thököly.

If the raftsmen be men of the Spiss country where, though three centuries have passed, the name of Thököly is not dead, their songs swell as they pass Likava; the deeds of Emerich are sung again under those ruined walls. Haply his spirit rises to the summons as Richard's did to Blondel's call.

The forests come down with singing. By night the raftsmen's fires wink at you from the river shoals. Then if a town beckons, high-booted legs are stretched under the tables of the nearest *hostinec*. Orava men swapping the saga of the river with stout polers from the Dunajec. Fiery Detvans pitted against wily Trenčiners. The lay of Likava for the ballad of Rožnahorka. Thököly against Čak Matyas. Accordions are brought out; there is the scrape and wail of gypsy violins. So it goes, song for song, round against round.

With the dawn the rafts are off again. Rapid water gives way to the long, sluggish reaches of the lower valley where poling is back-breaking business; the forests pindle into vineyards, the white Carpathians end, the plain begins. The Vah loses itself in the Danube.

At time of high water, a fortnight from the forests to Budapest — seventeen days to Belgrade — three weeks to the Black Sea.

Fortunes have been made so; are still so sought.

"It was my grandfather's way," Petr Ruzicka told



WOMEN OF GEMER — A GROUP ON THE STATION PLATFORM
AT ŽILINA



SLOVAK YOUTHS SEE THE SIGHTS OF PRAGUE



ČAK MATUS' BLACK TOWERS FROWN ON TRENČÍN



THE CASTLE OF THE "BLOODY COUNTESS"

me, "to bring his logs down the river to sell them in Budapest. There, with the money, he bought horses; fine horses, bred on the Hungarian plains. Sometimes two, sometimes three. Riding one and leading the others he returned home like a prince. Then he would sell the beasts in the September horse fair at Uherské Hradište."

What a chance for adventure!

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Žilina is the door through which the traveller from the west enters the Slovak wonderland. Six railway lines come into its station, which is like a magician's hat; you can never tell what may at any moment come out of it.

When I arrived there and set about the task of retrieving the three pieces of luggage I had forwarded from Olomouc five days before, the platform was crowded. The color in the baskets of red geraniums and blue lobelias that hung from its columns was echoed in the dress of a dozen women from the Gemer district. Their white linen caps were worked in fantastic designs of scarlet and blue; their white linen jackets were open over heavily embroidered bodices worn over blue skirts figured in designs of white. There they waited with that sublime patience which is the distinguishing trait of the peasant and the aristocrat. Presently a train came in. Still without hurry or outward excitement they bound the bulging linen-wrapped bundles on their backs, took up their heavy black leather boots and trooped across the pebble-strewn station yard.

Three or four youths in very tight trousers of horizon-blue cloth braided boldly in black at seams and pockets and wearing hats adorned with cascades of cock feathers and wreaths of pink roses, sprang from the third-class

compartments and mingled with the crowd about the buffet. They were followed more slowly by two Galician Jews in ankle-length, black overcoats and high-crowned hats, whose pallid cheeks were framed in long auburn curls; a Cistercian priest in white serge robes and a black derby hat; a shrewd-faced peddler with his wares — pocket knives, garters, combs, mirrors and walking sticks — arranged on a tray and slung across his chest; and a tall lean sheep herder from Detva in trousers of fringed white linen, fuller than a woman's skirt and reaching midway between knee and ankle, a black apron with a band of vivid embroidery and a vest of sheepskin with the fleece inside and the leather embroidered in colored wools in a design of tulips and marigolds.

From somewhere within the train came the music of an accordion and a chorus of voices lifted in song imploring someone's Anička to meet him by the spring.

It was like stepping into the middle of the Chauve Souris.

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Žilina away from its theatrical railway station is a grave little town with a solemn black church standing on a terrace at the edge of the old, higher quarter. There Count Thurzo called the first Protestant conference during the Reformation. The church has a separate bell tower, slightly askew and rather like a pewter pepper pot in need of scouring.

I went through an archway behind it, down a dark stone vaulted tunnel that had tiny shops opening on either side and came out into the square where the weekly cheese market was in progress.

The cheese of Žilina is of two orders. There is the

pallid, pear-shaped variety about the size of an avocado, and there are the smaller, heart-shaped cheeses also made of sheeps' milk but dyed crimson and laid along the stalls like homely valentines.

The cheese sellers' stalls ran around the edge of the square in the shadow of the arcade. In the center was a little park with a star-shaped flower bed of orange calendulas and purple heliotrope. Heaped about on the stones of the square between the wicker market carts were mounds of green watermelons, hundreds and hundreds of them, and even more of the smaller yellow and orange Roumanian melons that are grown in the southern valley of the Vah.

That square with its green and its orange, its purples and the rows of little crimson hearts was like the design from a Slovak dower chest transformed into life.

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At Žilina, the Vah hides away from the town behind a steep sandy hill. Almost one forgets the river. But a little to the east of the town, the green farm lands end at a steep rock wall. The cliffs rise precipitously from the plain. The urgent Vah has cut a passage through them twisted like a double S. There is just room through that deep chasm for the stream, the hard white road running close at its side, and the railroad which is pinned first on one side, then on the other of the cleft.

From these opposing rocky heights, the ruins of Strečno and Stary Hrad scowl across the chasm at each other — most celebrated and most hated strongholds in all Slovakia, the land of castles. It was in Stary Hrad, Old Castle, that Alaric the Goth was proclaimed king. His followers lifted him and bore him on his own shield

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from here down the valley of the Vah to the Danube, and so to Constantinople.

I walked out to Strečno, one afternoon, following the path along the river where the alders grew and the women knelt on the bank slapping the linen clean on the stony river bottom. They gave me friendly greeting as I passed: "*Dobre den, pani.*"

A steep trail trodden by the sheep leads from the plain up the southern and only accessible slope of Strečno's cliff to the height where the castle lifts its bleached bones against the sky. The centuries have taken away its terror and its menace. Its twelfth century gates stand wide, the court within its walls is heaped with stones fallen from the roofs. But Time has not, as with other ruins, wrapped its stark corpse in a veil of kindly green. No ivy mantles these grim grey blocks, nor softens the rigor of the parapets, nor stops the gaping wounds in the square central tower. Bleak and forbidding and death-like, Strečno stands upon its cliff and gazes across at the older and still more ruined Stary Hrad with an enmity more enduring than Time.

The two castles, so the story goes, belonged to two brothers, twins, who contested for the lordship of the Vah. The bitterness of their feud rang in all the valleys of the Tatras. Each brother appealed for aid to the Magyars south of the Danube, and they as other arbitrators before and since that day have been known to do, settled the dispute by swallowing up both warring brothers, their lands and all Slovakia with them.

That, say the Slovak bards, was the beginning of Hungary's rule north of the Danube, a dominance which lasted ten centuries and took a World War to end. The talons of Magyar rule have cut deep into the flesh of

Slovakia. Small wonder, with a feudal system which persisted until 1848. When Kossuth's rebellion of that year brought about certain changes in land ownership, taxation and military service, Hungary, with a wary eye on the nationalistic sentiment then growing in Bohemia, began her final disastrous policy of "magyarizing" the Slovaks. In every way she tried to destroy their language, their folk customs, their national consciousness. Only secondary schools were allowed in the towns north of the Danube. Even in villages where all but the school master and the notary were Slovak, education was conducted in Magyar. So nearly did she succeed that when their day of emancipation came, the Slovaks had not, by actual count, more than forty men of proven loyalty who were competent to hold positions of responsibility. But for the service of Czechs in these posts, the union of the two Slav nations in the new republic could never have been accomplished.

Ah, Strečno and Starý Hrad, you have much to answer for! Through ten centuries of serfdom the Slovaks who passed this way, brooding upon their wrongs, used to take up stones from the river bed and fling these at the two ruins on the cliffs, the while they cursed the brothers who had betrayed them into the hands of the Magyars.

Beyond Žilina as you follow the river on its way to the south, the gorge narrows again. The hills march down upon the stream in serried ranks, deep forested and dark. Feeble little roads trace a way up to the forest's edge then lose themselves. There are villages lost in that dark embrace, Čičmany, and Domaníža and others whose names are Slavic symphonies. Each of these villages, each valley in the Malá Tatras, which rise from the Vah's east

bank, in the White Carpathians along the opposite shore keeping the border between Moravia and Slovakia, is law and custom and tradition unto itself. Each has its own costume, each has its songs.

It is here, east of the Vah, true Slavdom begins. Onion domes swell portentously against the sky; all the heavy brooding melancholy of the Slav slumbers in their torpid contours. An ox-cart of woven wicker, hung like a basket between blue painted supports, creaks solemnly along the lane under the gnarled plum trees. A Jew peddler in long gabardine and red beard that has never known a razor spreads his pack of glittering gewgaws on the bank and the women and girls come trooping from the fields to look at his wares. Where the road mounts the swelling breast of the hill, stands a Calvary. No pietistic carven group this, such as intercede for wayfarers along the paths of the Tyrol. The stark figure is cut from tin. Its agony is imposed flat and unemotionally against the horizon . . . pure Slav that, heritage of Eastern Orthodoxy which forbids statues to the faithful. This Christ is crucified anew by bleak winters and midsummers of blazing heat. Sleet and snow for nails; rust for blood.

The motor road keeps abreast of the stream by crawling up and down the cliffs, and when the gorge is at its narrowest, by darting inland to return again a few kilometers further down. When the valley widens and the Vah traces a gypsy way between the shoals, it threads the waterside villages of low, whitewashed cottages where the babies and the geese waddle about on terms of happy equality, and the washing and the cooking pots of yellow clay are hung on the fences of woven willow twigs.

Flat-bottomed ferries, drawn on rope pulleys, carry peasants and their cattle across the channel. There are fords as well, but the Vah is famed for her trickiness. She changes her channel from season to season so that this year's ford is next spring's whirlpool. Each year she takes her toll of victims, as the white painted crosses and thin tin Calvaries with their withered spruce garlands set out on the shoals, bear testimony.

The hundred kilometers along the river from Žilina to Trenčín are lined with castles rising from the limestone heights above the stream. Not a pinnacle but is crowned with its romantic isolated pile. All, like Strečno and Sary Hrad, are ruined now. Their once redoubtable towers, in which so much of the barbaric drama of Hungarian history was played, house only bats and squirrels; the thin grass which springs up between the stones of their courts offers a Lenten fare for the peasants' goats.

The Vah valley was the mediæval trade route from Vienna to Poland. The clang and clatter of the later crusades passed this way. Magyar chiefs built their strongholds on the heights and grew rich on the spoils of the caravans.

They took no time for elegance of building, nor for decoration. But they cut their moats deep into the cliff; they threw up walls ten feet thick and guarded the courts within them with square central towers. Their dungeons and the strong-rooms for the plunder they hollowed into the mountain.

The names and deeds of these lords of the Vah have passed into the rich treasury of Slovak and Hungarian folklore. They are the legends of the Rakoczys and Zrinyis, of Bethlen Gabor, elected king of Hungary, of

the just King Matus Corvinus, the son of the great Hunyadi Janos who had held the Turk from Belgrade; and Jan Jiskra z Brandysa, the "Terror of the North," who championed the widowed Queen Elizabeth; of the Franciscan friar Juan of Capistrano, a mighty man of valor who preached through Hungary the duty of war on the Moslem and went into battle himself with his crucifix as a mace.

It is a wild, barbaric saga. The wail is still in the Slovak songs for the men who fell at Belgrade for Hunyadi. Each castle ruin suggests its song . . . Hrad Považske, where the robber barons held sway until Čak Matus killed them and destroyed their stronghold; Lednica which looks down on the White Water as it comes foaming through the Vale of Puchov, one of the wildest and most romantic of Slovakia's valleys; Vrsatec whose white walls rise like a coronet on the whiter brow of the Chmelova hills. John Sobieski marching to relieve Vienna in 1683 stopped to burn it; and Trenčín, the terror of whose black towers rings in the wild Lament for the gallant Francis Rakoczy who met defeat here and was sent forth into exile. The Rakoczy March, the work of an unknown composer, has played a part in Hungarian history similar to that played in France by the Marseillaise.

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The black walls and frowning dark towers of Čak Matus's fortress sneer at modern Trenčín, midway of the valley between Žilina and Bratislava. The city keeps the memory of the Roman general Terencius who wintered here in 176 A.D. on his way to fight the Quadi in Silesia. Beside it is carved a portrait of Jan Jiskra who held the

place in 1450. In earlier times the river flowed close under the cliff where the castle now stands. Now the water is no nearer than a quarter of a mile and the sandy space is filled with a thriving town — the trade centre of the Vah valley.

It was the weekly market day in Trenčín when I arrived. The long *namesti* leading up to its old fortified tower gate was lined with stalls. The noon sun flashed on racks of new tinware and drew the perfume from the heaps of melons set along the curb. Their cloying sweetness pervaded the town. In and out between the stalls and the market carts moved countrymen in rough white linen smocks and trousers; two or three of the older ones carrying the dignity of their long white woolen overcoats embroidered on back and sleeves with designs of tulips; and women of the Vah villages red-kirtled and red-kerchiefed. Instead of the usual black leather boots, these women wore leggins of knitted white wool, fastened to wooden soles and heels and drawn in loose wrinkles up to the knees.

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After six centuries Čak Matus is still very much alive on the lips of the inhabitants of the town under his castle rock, as alive and as potent as Nero is to the fisher folk of Capri. They still give you his name in the Magyar fashion — Čak Matus, not Matus Čak — as though the arrangement added to the old chieftain's ferocity. Čak Matus, Count of Trenčín, and by the strength of his own battle axe Lord of the Vah and Tatras! For eighteen years he ruled Slovakia and Moravia from the massive black castle on his height, defiant alike of the Turk in Belgrade and of the King in Budapest.

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A long flight of covered steps cut into the hill leads upward out of the *masarykovo namestie*, with an occasional landing where stands a shrine to aid the pious in the ascent, and for the refreshment of the worldly-minded, a window framing a view over Trenčín's roofs, across valley and river to the crest of the White Carpathians. At last one comes panting to a church which clings like a limpet to a ledge half way up the rock. Beyond it a narrow, high-walled drive leads up the steep to the castle's outermost gate.

A strong square black tower blocks the drive. Through its arch one looks into the courtyard which covers the crest of the rock pinnacle with the castle rising in the centre. Through that gateway and down this narrow, walled way rode Barbara Zapolsky, the daughter of the great Stephen who ruled in Trenčín after Čak Matus' day was past. Eight hundred gaily caparisoned horsemen attended the Lady Barbara on her way to Cracow to marry Sigismund the Great, King of Poland. That was in 1507.

But oh, vanished glory of the Zapolskys! Out from the gate as I drew near to it came a flock of geese. They were marshalled by a large gander whose eye at sight of me seemed to take on the fierceness and the menace of Čak Matus himself. The drive was narrow, to take but two horsemen riding stirrup to stirrup. The walls rose steep and sheer ten feet above my head. The flock proceeding down it toward me raised their wings and stretched their necks in mass formation.

It was one or the other of us.

I opened my sunshade to the attack.

But the gander had his women folk at his heels. They, like Barbara's eight hundred horsemen, lent assurance.

Though I opened and shut the sunshade vigorously, pointing it at him, he made nothing of this. His neck stretched viciously, his eye above the yellow beak was red and threatening. Forth from that terrible beak came hisses. He snapped defiantly at the sunshade's ribs. To advance in the face of those hissings called for more courage than is mine. To retreat before them, backward down the hill, was unfitting a free-born American.

I compromised . . . and screamed.

From a cottage just within the gate a woman came running. One flap of her "magerfu" apron and geese and gander let down their wings, drooped their necks, turned to peck industriously at the grass growing from the cracks in the wall. A stranger arriving at that moment would never have suspected that innocent-looking row of a single hiss.

The goose owner, smiling broadly, beckoned me on. The geese made no move, but for all that I passed them warily, with an eye to my ankles. Did, or did not, those stumpy tails waggle in derision?

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No wonder this fortress was deemed impregnable. The cliff falls away on three sides to the sands. On the other side, two strong walls and two deep moats keep off any approach from the green folded Inovecke Hills. From the height the square-topped towers of black stone command the river up and down and survey strategically the Vlarsky Pass over the White Carpathians which is the road into Moravia.

Čak Matus's is the largest of all the Vah castles and the best preserved. The Zapolskys lived here until a

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disastrous fire at the close of the eighteenth century demolished the living quarters. Now the great vaulted halls are roofless, the Barbara Tower is heaped with rubbish and the stairs mounting to the sentry's walk end perilously midway of their treads.

The castle has a famous well. The goose owner lighted a bundle of newspaper and flung it blazing down the shaft. There was a roar like a great wind in a chimney. Down it fell, down — down — One counted the seconds. Then there was a glint of dark waters, the ember was extinguished one hundred and seventy-five feet deep in the cliff.

This well, so records tell, was dug by Turkish prisoners. "Bring me water from the rock and you shall have release from your chains," Čak Matus said to them. For seven years they labored to strike the life-giving vein. When the water rushed in, Čak Matus smiled behind his beard and gave them release with the sword.

The ballad makers have had their way with this bit of history, too. From their verses emerges the tale of a beautiful Turkish maiden carried off by Čak Matus on one of his raids. Presently there came to Trenčín her lover, a Saracen knight, begging her release.

"When you bring water from the rock, then you will bring tears of pity from my eyes," Čak Matus retorted.

The lover begged leave to try. Alone, in the midnight, he invoked Mohammed, struck the rock and at dawn the waters gushed forth. And Čak Matus let him go; let us hope, with the lady.

Trenčín is the ideal center from which to visit the lower part of the Vah valley. South of here are still

more castles; Beckov, a delicate, fourteenth century aristocrat with finely sculptured doorways and towers and wall still intact; Brunovce with an oriental splendor borrowed from the Turks who swept up the Vah in the seventeenth century and were by turns enemy and ally of Hungary; and the haunted Čachtice.

The last is not visible from the river. But its sinister memory steals down from the lonely cleft in the White Carpathians where it stands. The raftsmen, poling desperately in this sluggish reach where the current lags, shudder, and devoutly cross themselves as they pass the stronghold of the Bloody Countess.

Here in the seventeenth century lived Lady Elizabeth Bathory of that mighty family which had given a Palatine to Hungary and a king to Poland. Her beauty was the toast of kings. When other belles faded she remained fair, nay, grew in seductiveness. Whispers began to circulate; not the Queen of Hungary's water, but the blood of peasant girls was the bath of the Countess Elizabeth. Tradition avers that no fewer than six hundred maidens were done to death in the castle of Čachtice that its chatelaine might regain her youth.

I had driven by motor down to the ruin from Trenčín, a morning's excursion. We left the car in the village of Svätý Kríž beside the wall of an old, old church that was fortified with parapets and gates like a fortress. The way from the village led up a deep lane between cottages that crouched stealthily under three feet of thatch, then across the barren, rising fields.

The Bloody Countess ended her days in an asylum in Hungary but her curse remains of Čachtice. The castle's strangely sinister outline stands stark against the sky.

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Even the sheep give it a wide berth and no living thing will stay within its crumbling walls. The Belle Dame sans Merci hath all in thrall.

The friend who had gone with me from Trenčín gave me the tale with a relish for the dramatic details.

“But she was a Magyar,” I said slyly.

She nodded gravely. “*Ano*. It is the Magyar way.”

Ten centuries of domination bite deep.

Down the lane to the village a group of laborers passed homeward from the fields. Their long, white frieze coats bordered with black and scarlet hung loosely from their shoulders. Their wooden rakes and threshing spades and flails bristled like primitive weapons.

They were singing. Not the bold recitative of Thököly, or the saga of Čak Matus. This song throbbed with a primitive passion and longing and wild regret:

Janko by the river stands

hoja hoj!

Washes there his face and hands

skutečne!

Janko, son, where hast thou fed?

hoja hoj!

That thy hands with blood are red?

skutečne!

I have shot the wood dove white

hoja hoj!

At my window all the night

skutečne!

Low it cried against the pane

hoja hoj!

Mother, 't will not cry again.

skutečne!

Janko, Jan, what hast thou done

hoja hoj!

'T was no wood dove there, my son.

skutečne!

'T was thy loved one, now lies dead.

hoja hoj!

This her blood that dyes so red.

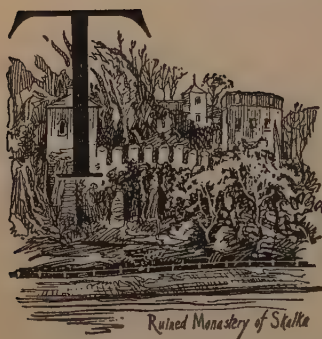
skutečne!





CHAPTER TWO

THE FERRYMAN OF SKALKA



THE path of the traveller is beset with generalizations. It is so easy to say: the Slavs are this: the Latins are that — to sweep all the mass of suspicion and circumstance into one convenient and neatly labelled pigeon hole.

But are they?

How close can a foreigner ever come to understanding the soul of a people? The traveller who is content with the things he sees comes to the end of his journey with a neat collection of facts and very little significance. But let him once step outside that security of attitude, let him once allow these forces about him to play upon him, let them enter into his life, and subtly he is conscious of something which has eluded his notebooks and camera. A something which, once he sees it face to face, invests all that he has seen and done and seen done with the significance which is truth.

At Trenčín the Povazi is a mile and more across. The Vah almost chokes itself with shoals. A path runs out across them to a knot of willows at the waterside where



THE RUINED MONASTERY OF SKALKA ON THE VAH



A GROUP BY THE ROADSIDE NEAR TREŇČIN

a ferry pulled on a rope, carries one over to the opposite rock of Skalka and the pilgrimage shrine of St. Benedict.

I found the boat tied under the willows and a bell hung on a bough, with a rope to pull its wooden clapper. I pulled, and presently from down the sand bar came a man. He stared at me under his palm as though debating whether my errand was worth his time and trouble to ferry me across. He must have decided that my fifty hellers were worth the collecting for he motioned me to get into the boat, loosed the mooring rope and the ferry slid into the stream.

He was a tall man, lean and rugged, with a strangely patient look. In his shapeless garments of white frieze he might have been lay brother to those monks of St. Benedict who built the Gothic cloister on the opposite mountain side . . . just such a brother as ferried Chekov across the stream on Easter Eve. Indeed, that story was in my mind when the man spoke to me, in Slovak first and, when I did not answer, in Magyar, which remains the language of politeness in the Povazi.

I shook my head. "*Ameritsky*," I said.

He stopped pulling on the rope, surveyed me; "*Ameritzky*?" Then he asked if I spoke German.

"Yes."

"Ah!" he said thoughtfully. "Never have I had an American in my boat before. Other nations, yes. Magyars, Czechs, Slovaks, Ruthenes, Poles, Serbs. Even, this year at the time of the big pilgrimage to Velehrad, Russians, and a company of Estonians. But an American, no. The gracious one is the first."

"Do you not find it very hard to pull the boat all alone when the current is strong?" I asked. "And when you have many passengers?"

"When it is hard like that, then I am most pleased," he replied simply. "When I feel the rope cut into my hands and the muscles on my back stand out and the Vah and I are struggling one against the other."

"That is very noble," I said.

"Not noble! No! Not at all!" he corrected me earnestly. At intervals he pulled on the rope, each pull giving just enough impetus to keep the boat in steady passage. "Let the gracious one hear: Three years ago, I and my cousin, Andrej Ružicka, were bringing our logs down with the spring flood. I am called Petr. Petr Ružicka. I am an Orava man. From Kubin. It was my first time on the rafts. Always before I have cut and bound the logs, and Andrej and his brother Bela have brought them down. But this time Bela was sick. So it was that I came.

"Five days we were on the way. The waters were running swift, you see. They nearly overpowered us at the curve round Milochoh where the gorge is very straight, so that almost a man can leap across it. We were the first to make the river that year. Andrej was very proud of that. He was a fine river man, my cousin Andrej. . . ."

We were not midway of the current. As hot weather drives the river to narrower bounds, its channel deepens as though in defiance. I could feel the tow at the boat bottom, could see the counter pull of Petr Ružicka's hands on the rope keeping us steady in the stream.

"It was here that it happened," he went on after a moment. "The Suca which comes in just above the rock of Skalka was high. There were loose logs rushing down. They struck us as we came round the bend and our raft went under. Andrej was knocked off. I, too.

But the logs must have struck him on the head for, you see, he never came up. The river had got him."

I murmured sympathetically.

"Yes! Yes! Andrej was drowned! And I was left! There on that sand bar, where you found the boat. And what could I do? Andrej was taken and I was left. Surely there was purpose in that. It is written, I said. Here I must stay. I pulled logs from the river to build this boat and a hut for myself on the sand bar."

"And now you work the ferry across."

"Even so. Before, there was no ferry. One had to go down to the bridge and so across and back by the road on the other side. When pilgrims have walked many days on the road and they come to the river and can see directly before them the shrine, then it is hard to have to walk six kilometers more."

There was a fatality in Petr Ružicka's philosophy . . . but still there was something about which I wondered. . . .

"And your family?" I asked him. "What about them?"

The boat was close to the bank now. He gave one final pull on the rope and we grazed the sand.

"I often think of them," he said. "I have a wife and two sons, in Dolni Kubin. Doubtless they think that I am dead. Like Andrej. Or that I have deserted them and am working somewhere in Hungary or in Serbia. Life is hard. . . ."

He helped me out and I paid him the fifty hellers for the passage, adding another fifty for himself. But this he refused.

"No! The gracious one goes to Svaty Benedict. She will say a prayer for me at the shrine."

"Why not go there, yourself?" I asked. The white

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pilgrimage church, goal of many pilgrimages, rose from the green mound above the shore where we stood.

He shook his head. "Someone might come and pull the bell and I would not hear. No! But of each person I carry across I ask a prayer. The gracious one will not forget."

I promised and left him there at the waterside, while I mounted the path to the shrine.

A hermitage has stood on this rock since the eleventh century. The dates 1012-1250 over the door of the present Romanesque chapel indicate that if it is not the original it is, at least, built of those early stones.

In the time of Čak Matus, there lived in a cave nearby a holy man who ministered at the shrine. One day robbers from Hrad Považie up the river, pausing to rest their horses, heard from the cave the clink of coins and a voice counting, "One . . . two, one . . . two. . . ." They fell on the hermit, murdered him and cast his body into the Vah. But though they searched body and cave, all they found were two copper kreutzers, the sum of the hermit's worldly possessions.

The country folk drew the body of their holy man from the river and appealed to Čak Matus. It seems a little like calling in the kettle to judge the blackness of the pot, but Čak Matus would brook no other light-fingered gentry in his neighborhood. He made war on Hrad Považie, destroyed it, and cleared the valley of its robber barons. He also established a community of Benedictine monks on the rock of Skalka where the grave of the murdered hermit became a mecca for pilgrims.

The abbey is in ruins now. Vines trail over its lovely Gothic windows, adding their ephemeral tracery to the stone foliage left by fourteenth century craftsmen. Red-

berried pagan ash trees have sprung up in the ordered cloister where the monks of St. Benedict were buried. The cave in the cliff where the hermit counted his kreutzers is set with an altar where the pilgrims gather on his feast day in July.

When I came back to the river Petr Ružicka was seated on a rock waiting for me. He helped me in and pushed off. The sun was high and bright and the breeze that blew down the valley brought the dry sweet scent of the cut harvest. A wagon drove out on the opposite shoal and a woman in a scarlet headkerchief got out and pulled on the bell rope.

I thought how at the time of the pilgrimage those sands must bloom with kerchiefs and embroidered bodices and sleeves as the pilgrims bathed and donned the fine garb that they had carried in their bundles, before presenting themselves at the altar of the holy Benedict.

"I am thinking," Petr Ružicka said. "There is my wife and our two sons. It is three years since I left Dolní Kubín. Who knows, someday when the pilgrimage is on they may come this way to Velehrad — even to Stalka to Svatý Benedict. They may even cross the river here in my boat. Now that there has come an American. . . ."

And I assured him that stranger things had come to pass.



CHAPTER THREE

BY THE BLUE DANUBE



AFTER its castles, the Považí is chiefly famous for its Baths. East of Olomouc, Marienbad and Carlsbad are foreign names of slight import. Fashion and honest *bourgeoisie* of Slavdom and Magyardom pin their faith to the healing waters of Thenčianske Teplice, the vapors of Luhačovice, the hot, radio-active mud of Piešťany.

No bathtub-favored American can be expected to understand the reverence with which the Czechs and Slovaks alike regard a stay at one of these cures. The Prague business man's idea of a successful vacation is to spend it at as many *laznes* and *kupeles* as his purse and his fortnight permit. It would seem as though to the upper and middle classes this annual excursion fills the same need inherent in the Slav soul that urges the peasant folk on their religious pilgrimages to Velehrad and Staré Hory.

Contrary to the British and American idea that cures are intended for the ill, the Czechs and Slovaks contend that what is curative for the ill is preventative for the

well, and that an annual fortnight of prevention is worth months of cure later on. Whether due to the practice of this theory or not, I am not prepared to say, but the mortality of the republic is surprisingly low. Not long ago, the Life Insurance Bureau of its excess profits endowed Prague with a magnificent Public Library.

A motor bus runs from Trenčín to the spa of Trenčianske Teplice, tucked away in a fold of the green Inovecke hills, a few kilometers east of the Váh. It is a charming little resort gay with red geraniums and red-roofed hotels and villas with their names painted in ornamental Slovak lettering across their white fronts. The shops, the concerts in the park and two rival *kinos* keep one from thinking overmuch about the health side of the cure. The theory seems to be that Trenčianske's waters are generally good for whatever ails you, while the gypsy orchestra at Baračka, the outdoor restaurant at the edge of the park, its tennis courts and opportunities for flirtations are unrivalled.

It is a short distance from Irenčianske Tepla over the Vlarslay Pass to Lubačovice.

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Already in my journeying by rail I had made acquaintance with the State Railway Guide. This is really a remarkable volume, a Bradshaw par excellence. It gives you, once you have learned to find your way among the Czech place names and cabalistic symbols which may mean all sorts of things from: "This train goes only on days of holy pilgrimages of the Uniate Church," to "Stops for sausages" and "Will not carry live stock," not only the train schedules of all the lines throughout the republic but the time tables of the motor bus routes,

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as well. By cross indexing these, the traveller with an imagination is able to make all sorts of connections and changes from one line of travel to another.

As for the symbols, they are a story in themselves. The tiny drawing of an automobile beside the name of a station announces a motor bus connection to somewhere, and the number that appears beside it refers to the route printed elsewhere in the Guide. A postman's horn tells that a mail cart meets the train and that the driver can be persuaded into taking a passenger whose business is sufficiently urgent.

A chalice, turned from its ancient Utraquist significance, foretells sausages, caraway-seeded rolls and beer trundled in a cart alongside the train at that station. A crossed knife and fork holds out the promise of a fully equipped restaurant on the platform even to the inevitable melancholy and spotted waiter and the only slightly less melancholy and even more spotted small boy assistants.

From all evidence one gathers en route, it would seem as though the Czechs and the Slovaks travel to eat.

Here, east of the Vah the menus, at these station restaurants are printed strategically in three languages — Czech or Slovak, to a foreign eye the two are almost identical, — German and Magyar. With one unexplainable exception — the list of entrees is always given in French. And at the end of that, appears inevitably a dramatic climax printed in bold capitals and as one word: **HAMANDEGGS**.

No sooner do you cross the causeway, which binds the borough of Piešťany on the Vah's right bank with the island where the spa and baths are located, than you

step out of Slovakia and into the first act of a Molnar comedy.

The tree-lined walks are thronged with ladies and gentlemen clad in silk pyjamas of surprising hues and strolling with a nonchalance which only Vienna could direct. Others, more modest or less comely in *deshabille*, make the transit from bath to hotel in the wheeled sedan chairs, decorously curtained, that are propelled by attendants wearing the picturesque Pieštany costume.

This dress is one of the most colorful of all the costumes of the Považi. It calls for a great deal of scarlet embroidery on the blouse and black apron and a way of knotting the scarlet headkerchief that is extremely fetching. The effect of that gay promenade under the lime trees is of an *opera bouffé*. Nor is the music lacking. A band dispenses gay music in the kur-park. In addition, each restaurant and coffee house has its Hungarian, or tsigane orchestra whose bows are touched with the fire of Romany.

The curative baths of Pieštany were known to the Romans, but the wars which raged unceasingly up and down the Považi throughout the Middle Ages retarded the development of the spa until the sixteenth century.

Latterly Czech industry has developed Pieštany until it ranks in popularity with Mariánske Lázně and Karlovy Vary. More than twenty thousand guests come here each year. It has the advantage of an express connection with Vienna in less than four hours, which makes it a favorite watering place of the Balkans and Central Europe.

Pieštany's island is really the crater of a submerged volcano. The hidden giant keeps sending up spurts of hot, sulphur-laden water under the bed of the cold run-

ning Vah. The steaming, odoriferous waters are piped to the bath houses on the island, cooled, and used for bathing and drinking.

But the pride of Piešťany is its mud. Out from fissures in the crater and from more than fifteen hundred feet below the river bottom, oozes the molten earth which has strong radio-active properties that make it curative in the treatment of rheumatism, sciatica, gout and similar disorders. There are tales of sufferers who limped to Piešťany, took the cure, threw their crutches to the winds and skipped nimbly away. And should you look doubtful of this, there is the case of canes and crutches, set up in the museum as one sees similar tributes at the shrines of Lourdes and Montserrat, to prove your doubts unwarranted.

In the seventeenth century Suleiman the Magnificent, riding to besiege Vienna, turned up the Považi and descended upon Piešťany. He massacred the men and carried away the women to the harems of Stamboul. At that time, if one is to believe the painting which hangs in the kur-saal, the bathers, men and women, disported themselves in the mud at the river's edge. Now, since privacy has become more widely appreciated, the mud is piped from its source to the cubicles in the bath-house, cooled by having cold water sprayed over it — its temperature as it comes from the earth is 150 degrees Fahrenheit — and there the patients are bedded down in tubs of the hot, molten, black, sulphur-smelling mass.

As you lie submerged to the ears in the warm, earthy stickiness, the wonder grows in you at the perspicacity of the Turk whose eye could discern the houri beneath the layers of primeval slime.

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What it has lost in forfeiting its national characteristics, Pieštany has gained in cosmopolitanism. At the table d'hôte, I found myself eating in six languages and discussing politics in as many more. No matter how hard you may try, you cannot escape the virus which affects the Balkans and Central Europe. Autonomy, the United States of Europe, a free Danube, the Poland-Ukraine tangle, the poisoning cases in Hungary, Prohibition, the Young Plan and the trial of Professor Tuka came in with the soup and stayed till the cheese. It is significant that whereas, before the war, the Slav nations talked Pan-Slavism and looked to the forming of a Pan-Slav State with Russia at its head, today, and just as violently then, to quote Briand's now famous phrase, they "talk European."

My right hand neighbor was an Albanian minister of education. He told me, not without pathos, that his government stationed him in Florence where it expected him to watch over the seventy or more Albanian students in the various Italian universities lest they fall into the clutches of the fascists.

The thought of that very mild-mannered and earnest gentleman pitted single handed against il Duce was not without its irony. Could all the waters and all the mud of Pieštany build up the required power of resistance?

Monsieur S—— was the first Albanian of my acquaintance. I had always thought of his countrymen as a race of mustachioed brigands wearing baggy, white linen trousers with crimson cummerbunds, and brandishing scimitars. It was in the nature of a shock to have the first and only Albanian in one's collection a bald and spectacled doctor of pedagogy who suffered from neuritis.

Monsieur S—— had all the persistence of the true student. He carried with him two gnawing perplexities — why, he pondered, did the women, the *hochge boren*, of Geneva, whence he had just come from a Congress of Educators, lack so completely the charm of the women of Paris and Vienna?

That, I confessed, was a matter on which I could not enlighten him.

Ah, then perhaps — surely — as an American — I could solve for him that other perplexity, which concerned certain clauses in the Monroe Doctrine —

“Mademoiselle, je vous prie d’avoir la bonté de m’expliquer —”

“Pardon, monsieur, c’est impossible. Il m’arrive l’heure du bain —”

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Below Piešťany the Vah leaves the shelter of the Little Carpathians and strikes eastward across the sandy plain to find its destiny in the Maly Dunaj above Komarno. The railway leaves the gypsy stream to its own inconsequent ways and follows the diminishing spur of the Bila Karpaten straight to Bratislava on the true Danube.

I like best to arrive in a strange city after nightfall. The dark allows your imagination full play. Streets that turn prosaic by day are invested then with mystery and allure. Gateways hold romantic possibilities. An open, brightly lighted window discloses the corner of a drawing room, a woman comes forward into the picture frame and beside her a man. Her face is turned from you, as she reaches a hand to his shoulder — The end or the opening of the play? You do not know. The clop-clop of the horses’ hoofs bears you on.

It was after nine in the evening when I arrived in Bratislava; the warm August night enveloped me as we drove away from the station. Presently, we swung round a corner straight upon a brightly lighted *kaviarna* with crowded tables set out on the pavement of the Square. There was the hum of voices, laughter, and intermingled with these the mad, wild strain of the *czardas* played by the orchestra within doors.

Then a sharp turn to the left, through a curving, silent, ill-lighted street that twisted subtly between the walls of old palaces. Their courtyards breathed mould and chill decay on the warm night air. So into a small irregular *namesti* where wide-bellied wicker farm carts were drawn up in readiness for the morrow's market. Torches flared in iron sockets above the stalls and lighted the heaps of plums, melons and grapes whose perfume rose like incense. Before the door of a low shop hung the carcass of a wild boar and a stag with noble antlers.

Then darkness again; the cab clattered over a bridge spanning the moat of old Pressburg, through a deep tower gate whose pride was humbled by Napoleon, and so into a wide, tree-lined promenade thronged with strolling couples and lighted by a dozen open air cafés.

Then on the summer night a new scent, a freshness, a stir of great waters running swiftly — the Danube.

One sees Bratislava at its truest after dark. Prague hums with industry from eight until eight; by ten o'clock its streets are silent and deserted. Not so Slovakia's capital. During the day it is a sleepy, indifferent provincial town; with the night it comes magically alive. Not a little of the light-heartedness and witchery of Vienna has floated down the river and found lodgment there.



Bratislava, Pressburg, Pozgony—the town that nestles against the Danube's curving arm has worn all three names in its chequered past—was the ancient coronation town of old Hungary before the building of Budapest. Here came the kings of the Arpad line to be crowned with the crown of St. Stephen. Here came Stephen himself, the first Christian ruler of the wild Magyars. He owed his conversion to the Bohemian St. Adalbert. Invested with royal panoply, he rode his horse to the height above the city where the castle now stands and with his drawn sword made four passes to the four corners of the earth, in token of his readiness to defend the kingdom on all sides.

Other kings, freshly crowned in St. Martin's church below the hill, observed the same ceremonial. But none with the grace of the twenty-two year old princess whom the Hungarians, keeping at least the letter of their Salic law, hailed as "Our King Maria Theresa."

Bratislava, despite its hard won democracy, remains the city of the great Empress. Her arms are over its tower gate, her monogram and coronet on the façades of the old, yellow washed baroque palaces that front on Dlhá Ulica and the cathedral plaza. The Abbe Liszt lived in one of these. His ear caught the echoes of the raftsmen's songs from the Považi and these he wove into his Hungarian Rhapsody, which is Hungarian only by politics and really Slovak. The composer Hummel was born here.

It is a city to wander in. Each turn of its streets, and they are as tortuous as Prague's, brings you some new vista out of the storied past. Archways with fantastic

heraldic devices lead into wynds as straight as those in Auld Reekie. Where Prague is dour, Bratislava has time and spirit for elegance. The Town Hall shows a magnificent ornate portal and a line of fine sculptured upper windows that call up memories of palaces in Toledo and Valladolid. There the young "King" Maria Theresa, bearing her infant son in her arms, appeared before the Hungarian Diet and called on them to protect her rights against Frederick the Great. It was a strategy calculated to fire the romance in the wild Magyar blood. The aged Count of Palffy drew his sword and offered it on bended knee, and the other deputies followed, and Bratislava rang with the stir of armies going out to establish a woman's right to empire.

There is a romance about the arch-ducal palace set within its gardens and in the heart of the city. It was the home of Archduke Ferdinand and the Archduchess Isabella. Here came Franze Ferdinand, heir to Emperor Franz Josef, commanded to find a wife among the six daughters of the house. Not one of his royal cousins, but their lady-in-waiting, the Bohemian Countess Sophia Čotek won the prince's heart. The Arch-Duchess, furious, sent Countess Sophia away in disgrace. The Prince returned to Vienna to sulk until he won over the emperor to permit a morganatic marriage. So began the romance that was ended at Sarajevo in 1914.

As in all cities that have enjoyed Hapsburg favor, there is a multiplicity of convents. There is the Street of the Capuchins, of the Ursulines, of the Franciscans, of the Poor Clares. The Convent of the Poor Clares, with its aloof and delicate Gothic chapel, has been turned over to the University for its library. In the Street of the Ursulines, you pass under silent walls whose rows

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of cell windows are still fitted with wooden gratings in lieu of glass. Here Helena Thököly was made a prisoner.

Shops in the Michalska ulica offer bits of old brocade and petit point, vases of Sevres and Holic, and crystal chandeliers, still spattered with candle grease from the tapers that glowed in them when the news came that Venice had fallen and the Hapsburg glory swept to the Adriatic. In one of these windows, set out on a crimson cushion, I saw a lady's card-case of gold mounted in seed pearls. Within that gentle coronet was a miniature, the likeness of the ill-starred Duke de Reichstadt — l'Aiglon.

Bratislava's cathedral is dedicated to St. Martin, and a statue of the noble saint in the full uniform of a Hungarian general rides grandiosely on the terrace before the south door. The church was begun in 1090 when the tide of Crusaders flowed through Pozgony on their way to the East. Portions of that early structure remain in the apse and choir, but the rest of the church — the long grey nave, the clerestory and the western door — is Gothic of the fourteenth century.

In the early church in 1215 the Hungarian Princess, "Saint" Elizabeth, was married to the son of the Landgrave of Thuringia. Her legend is still one of the most popular in Central Europe especially among the Hungarians, who boastingly point to two of their royal house on the Calendar of saints against France's one.

Again and again, through five centuries, St. Martin's has been flooded with the pageantry of bridals and coronations. At the sealing of a king, St. Stephen's crown was set upon his brow. A queen, who was a consort, was deemed sufficiently honored when the circlet was



BRATISLAVA'S CASTLE SEEN FROM THE STREET OF THE
POOR CLARES



A LITTLE SHEPHERD OF THE HILLS OF SLOVAKIA



DEVIN FIGURES IN THE NIBELUNGEN SAGA

set upon her right shoulder. In the long history of this, one of the most picturesque and interesting bits of royal insignia, it has been worn by only two women — both queens of Hungary by right of birth and the votes of the nobles — Mary, the wife of the Hapsburg Sigismund, and Maria Theresa. According to tradition the crown was intended by Pope Sylvester as a gift to the king of Poland. An angel directed him in a dream to send it, instead, to King Stephen.

Of the cathedral's fitting companion, the castle on the King's Mount, only the outer shell remains. Italian soldiers, who were garrisoned here in 1811, weary of carrying wood and water up the steep, fired the historic pile. The flat square walls, with their stumpy corner towers, rather like a titanic four post bedstead, seem inadequate to their stirring past.

Again and again the castle sheltered queens of Hungary and their children through troublous times. Here Queen Euphrosyne defended her son's rights against the emperor of Byzantium, Manuel Commenus. Here Mary waited for the news from Mohacs. The couriers cried beneath her window the tidings of King Louis' death, the loss of all Hungary to the Turks and twenty thousand captives carried away to the slave markets on the Golden Horn. Here Frederick Barbarossa gathered his forces for the Third Crusade. Margaret, the French wife of the Hungarian King Bela, welcomed them and presented the emperor with a pavilion of scarlet embroidered in gold, the work of her own hands. And Bela swayed by the pageantry and the glory of the venture in the East, made his vow to take up the Cross — a vow which Margaret was to fulfil in his stead and keep with her death below the walls of Acre.

Of course, the Danube is not blue. As it sweeps around the curve on which Bratislava stands, its waters are a dingy, muddy green. It has, however, gained in impressiveness since leaving Vienna; the Morava has emptied its torrent into it at Devin on the Czechoslovak shore just above. Now it moves, smooth and swift, in a tideless flood on its way to the East.

By the Versailles Conference, the Danube was declared an international waterway and Bratislava a free port through which grain and hides and wool and swine from the Balkans are shipped into western Europe.

At the city's eastern edge rise the gaunt cranes and bulky warehouses and grain elevators of the freight terminal through which approximately one hundred thousand tons of merchandise are shipped annually.

There's a line of chugging little steamers that ply between Vienna and Budapest and make Bratislava a port of call. The river works strange things with the time schedule. The board set up on Bratislava's quay with the time table of sailings reads like one of those problems in mathematics which were such an uncomfortable part of my early education. If a ship sails from Vienna to Bratislava in two hours and fifteen minutes, and from Bratislava to Vienna in five hours what is the speed of the river? Is it the fitness of the ship, or the patience of the passengers that is to be proved?

I gave it up and went on board.

Here the Danube divides into three; one arm reaches jealously around a segment of Slovakia, one stretches out to embrace a slice of Hungary. Between flows the true Danube, settling all disputes as to boundaries, at least on paper. At Komarno, some sixty-five miles to

the east, the three streams come together again under the frowning walls of the fort Hungary built for herself and which now trains its guns on her; continues on past Gran where Stephen, saint and king, was born — Gran, that was founded, say the proud Magyars, one hundred and fifty-five years after the deluge; past Szob, which is the southeastern gate of Czechoslovakia and the frontier station into Hungary on the Budapest line; through the narrow mountain gorge where stands the ruin of Visegrad, and so under the bridges of Ofen which is Budapest.

The true Danube and its upper arm, the Little Danube, form the Great Rye Island of Slovakia, the largest fresh water island in Europe. It is the bread basket of the republic. Its one thousand square miles are one great grain field, dotted here and there with low, whitewashed villages. Now, in late August, the harvest is gathered; old women glean in the golden stubble, and at the field's edge the young women drive their spades, already making ready for the crop that is to come.

Harvest time on the Velky Ostrov is the hey-day of the year. Old harvest customs that have their origin in paganism are followed to this day. The last sheaf called *babiečka*, the grandmother, is brought in with ceremony; the harvest crown of plaited wheat stuck with poppies is set up on a tall pole in the field, and the harvesters dance about it, continuing their praise of *Ziva*, goddess of grain.

From Bratislava, the little steamer bound for Vienna chugged noisily upstream under the wall of the imposing barracks which figures in so many plaintive Slovak folksongs;

“On the Danube there at Pressburg
There’s a fortress newly built. . . .”

And just as in the song, soldiers lounged idly on the parapet and waved us on our way.

Bratislava lies in the curving arm of the river. Beyond the curve all hint of town is lost. On the Austrian shore, woods and fields stretch away in peaceful panorama. On our right, the green valleys of Slovakia run down to the Danube. Their rocky sides are planted with vineyards from which come the Palugay wines that are no small source of Bratislava’s wealth. In another month the vintage would begin, with interminable lines of men and women bent under the great hampers of grapes bound upon their shoulders, plodding down the paths to the waiting presses and a million greedy bees humming over their heads — wine and honey. One recalls that Herodotus, writing twenty-four centuries ago, spoke of the armies of bees that rendered portions of the Danube valley uninhabitable.

An hour upstream we came on Devin. The great limestone rock, a miniature Gibraltar, rears itself six hundred feet above the river. On its other side, the Morava, coming down out of Moravia, sweeps against this bulwark as it rushes to meet the Danube. This mingling of the waters has bleached and furrowed the face of the cliff, has worn and chiseled it with the pattern of the centuries. From its summit portions of two square stone towers, bits of broken wall and along the gentle green slope that binds the headland to Slovakia two weather beaten bastions tell of the Slav fortress which crowned the height in the ninth century.

Devin was to Slovakia what Rabi was to Bohemia.

It was the stout citadel of the mighty Svatopluk, Duke of Moravia, who divided Europe with Charlemagne. Svatopluk's empire that stretched from the Oder to the Danube, composed as it was of the Czechs and Slovaks, was the forerunner of the present republic. It was the last union of the western Slav tribes before the advent in Europe of the troubling Magyars.

Before Svatopluk the Slavs doubtless had a temple on this site where in still earlier times Marcus Aurelius had established his legions while he went back to Vienna to die. And long after the Great Moravian Empire, like Burgundy and Provence, had passed into legend, Ottokar, the Bohemian, held Devin against the encroachments of that predatory Rudolph of Hapsburg who founded his family fortunes along the Danube.

With Hainburg across the river, Devin figures largely in those hero legends of the migration of the tribes along the Danube, which an unknown twelfth century minstrel of Swabia wove into the Nibelungen Lied. Here at Devin, Kriemhilde, the unforgetful, plotted her revenge on Gunther. Here came Attila, the Scourge of God; here the Burgundian knights feasted in hall and held their tournaments in the courtyard. Napoleon was the last conqueror to appear on the Danube. Advancing to Wagraw he finished the demolition of Devin.

I had left the steamer at the little landing stage below the rock and took the path up the gentle approach from the land side. On this slope the giant's flanks were covered with fine green grass. A flock of sheep grazed there, watched over by a small shepherd in a tattered garment. He was not alone. A small girl with a bundle of dried poppy stalks and pods on her head had stopped on the path ahead of me. The two were deep in

conversation. They accepted me without comment with the eternal acquiescence of childhood. Doubtless, so their progenitors accepted Kriemhilde.

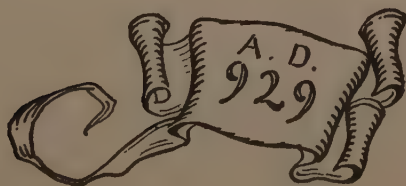
Of the citadel, only enough remains to allow one's fancy free rein. The stumpy walls outline halls and armory and bastions. The lichened stones, smoothed by the condoning centuries, whisper old tales; tales of the bold Albert of Devin who loved a maid of Carinthia, Bertha by name. Bertha's uncle with the connivance of a wily abbot, shut her up in a convent and appropriated to himself her lands. Doubtless the abbot had his share. At least, when Albert had located the convent and forced his way in and stolen his love away and brought her here to Devin, the uncle and the abbot with an army at their heels arrived before the gates. The walls of Devin mocked all the besiegers but one—Famine. When at last the gates yielded, the lovers climbed to the summit of the cliff, embraced and leaped to death together in the Danube below.

I lingered on the Nun's Leap, as the ledge is called to this day, watching the sunset redden the roofs and steeples and castle walls of old Hainburg on the other shore. Through the evening hush came the ceaseless whisper of the river, the second stream of Europe which has been the pathway for so much of glory and of shame. A long tow of barges, loaded to the gunwale with melons from Roumania, was passing upstream. In the stern of the last of them a man in a crimson fez stood with head thrown back and stared upward at the towering cliffs. The sun went down sullenly behind Austria. Great clouds rolled up out of the west like the hosts of Peter's crusaders bound this way for paynimry and cry-

ing at sight of Devin — “Jerusalem! Jerusalem!” From the Little Carpathians came the grumble of thunder, the smell of advancing storm.

The small shepherd had driven his flock down the slope to the waiting fold; the poppy maiden had gone on her way. I hurried down the path to the village below the height where a white walled *hostinec* promised shelter until the boat should come.

It was of the usual sort — a common room with a bar and beer pulls, and the proprietor's living-rooms behind this. The proprietor brought me a three-legged stool and set it just within the door where I could watch the grey curtains of the rain sweep down the river; where I could lift my eyes to a large, brightly colored lithograph that hung on the opposite wall and represented Masaryk ascended into heaven, his coat tails lost in clouds of glory. There he was receiving General Štefanik, Slovakia's hero of the World War. The general appeared in full uniform with a halo above his military cap. Over President and warrior hovered an angel with two laurel crowns and below on common earth a Czech workman and a Slovak farmer clasped hands in unity.





CHAPTER FOUR

I AM THE GUEST OF THE LORDS OF PALFFY



HOUGH I had come into Bratislava by train, and a local train of the second class, at that, I departed from it in state in a motor all my own.

I had walked across Silesia and spent in those four days of vagabondage less than ten dollars. I had steadfastly resisted the lure of Vienna's shops; L'Aiglon's miniature, though sighed for, remained to tempt the crowns of another passerby. And what, I argued, is the use of economy save as a prelude to luxurious expenditure?

Not that this particular motor could be counted unto one for luxury. It was an elderly Praga of uncertain temper and asthmatic tendencies. It was in point of fact a bargain; "a chance in a summer," as the hall porter explained to me. Here was its owner, on account of some technicality connected with its purchase of its licensing, compelled to drive it to the authorities in Trenčín, and eager for a passenger who would defray the expense of at least half that journey. And here —

the hall porter pointed out, quite as though he himself had produced me from the cosmos for the occasion, much as a conjurer takes a rabbit from a hat — here was the American *panička*, about to return to the Upper Vah valley. The chance was opportune.

It was arranged, therefore, that the car should take me not to Trenčín, but to Bojnicke kupele, a small spa on the estate of the Lords of Palffy in the Inovecke hills east of the Vah. From that point I could make my way to the village of Čičmany — a place I wanted very much to see — and so back to Žilina. The car and its monosyllabic driver would go by a cross road to meet their accusers at Trenčín.

The arrangement seemed ideal, the morning was fine, the porter rubbed his hands with gratification. While sleepy-head Bratislava still slumbered behind its drawn blinds, we drove out through the old town across the bridge over the moat, and through the far-stretching modern suburbs en route for adventure.

Round about Bratislava stretch the corn lands. They were golden that day with the shorn stubble. Vacant, too, for it was Sunday. One missed the stooping figures of the gleaners. All along the road we passed country folk, prayer books in hand, walking to church. The women's snowy, frilled kerchiefs bloomed in the paths across the fields.

Where the Little Carpathians slope down to meet the corn lands were vineyards, terrace on terrace. In one an early vintage was in progress. The owner had set up the sign, a bundle of straw on a tall pole and it drew the men as running sap calls the bees.

We came into Modra through a tall tower gate that threw its grim shadow on the white little town. Modra

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is famous for its Ceramic, an industry three hundred years old. Here is made the beautiful Slovak pottery, that is painted in vivid colors with the traditional designs of flowers and birds. The Ceramic has a noteworthy collection of old pieces and of painted wooden chests and cupboards, the work of peasant craftsmen, from which the workmen copy and adapt the designs. Art pottery is carried on as a cottage industry in many villages of Slovakia, notably at Modra, Trstena and Komarno. Each village, each family, has its own designs. A Slovak who really knows his country can tell at a glance the *zupa*, even the village where a piece of pottery, a strip of embroidery, a lace kerchief, or a painted dower chest was made.

The Sunday morning market was in progress along the town's one unshaded, unpaved street. To bring crockery to Modra would seem tantamount to carrying coals to Newcastle, but Czech industry was not to be daunted. There was a long stall of Budějovice enamel ware, in gaudy colors and stamped with garlands of impossible flowers — And, alas, alas, there were the wives of Modra's pottery makers buying it!

At the town's other edge we ran along the wall of a disused monastery. Only the chapel, with the date 1714 over its baroque porch and the hatchments of old Magyar nobles, remained. The village uses the close for a burial ground. A funeral procession, led by a youth with a banner of black velvet, moved across the hummocky grass. Beside the rude wooden bier walked four men bearing tall staves with lanterns atop. Their long coats of white homespun, worked with scarlet and black, hung like priestly garments from their shoulders, leaving their arms free. Behind trailed a score of women

and girls, the village choir, while the choir master, with his tuning fork to his lips, paced up and down the column, striving to keep their shrill notes within bounds.

The traveller without a hobby is like a ship without a sail — she spreads no expectant canvas to the winds of chance. I had come to Slovakia eager to discover for myself the folk arts of this people. The costumes, embroideries, and laces, above all the marvellously decorated wooden cupboards and chests and replicas of hearths which one sees in the Kinsky Museum in Prague and in the collections in Bratislava's Town Hall had made me aware of the artistic development of the Slovak peasant. In its decorative arts, as in its folk music and songs, this land is incalculably rich. It is as though, robbed of national expression and intellectual development for ten centuries, the energy of the race had been turned to the creation of beauty. One thinks, at once, of Ireland whose case was similar, and the wealth of poetry that the Dark Rosaleen has given to the world.

In Bohemia, except among the Chods, the picturesque embroidered costumes are of the past. One sees them in the museums and a few are brought out and worn self-consciously on the national holidays — the birthday of Hus, July sixth, and the feast of Svaty Vaclav on September twenty-eighth. In Slovakia, the beautiful, ornate dress which differs in every *zupa*, has never been supplanted.

Love of color and a sensitiveness to its use are part of the Slovak heritage. Not only has every *zupa* its own costume, but it has its own form of embroidery. In Dětva orange, yellow and blue are the colors which predominate in the designs formed of an interlocking chain

stitch which belongs exclusively to the women of that district. The Čičmany stitch is a form of weaving, identical with that which is known in Sweden as *haedebo*. The women of Revuča work their bold floral patterns of crimson and blue in thin wools and with an over and over stitch. In the Nitra *zupa* the embroidery and the linen used is finer than elsewhere in Slovakia, and the designs of eyelets and delicate connecting tracery show threads of silver and gold.

This embroidery, which makes any gathering of peasants as colorful as a garden of flowers, the pottery also characteristic of each region, the wooden furniture that is adorned with designs of flowers and birds and hearts, and the cottage fireplaces which in some sections the women decorate with rich and intricate patterns similar to the embroidery — all these, with their unplumbed treasury of legend and folk lore and song make the valleys between the Danube and the High Tatras a wonderland for the traveller with an imagination who asks of a country more than cathedrals and art galleries, Baedeker-starred "sights," and Ritz hotels.

"Slovakia needs no museum," said the charming and learned gentleman who is curator of Banská Bystrica's museum and whom I met later. "Slovakia is a museum."

And he is right.

In Bratislava I had made the acquaintance of František Vaclavík, himself a student of the folk arts of his people and a brother of Antonín Vaclavík whose book on the Decorative Arts of Slovakia I already knew. He had given me the names of three villages, all within a five mile radius of Modra — "Čifer for costumes; Cataj for painted hearths; Nemečský Grob for both."

My goal that morning was Nemečky Grob.

The village, when we drove into it, was very quiet for it was the church hour. The white cottages seemed to doze blandly under the lee of the enormous straw stacks, one to a house, and topping it by twenty feet or more. The flocks of geese waddled along the banks of the village ditch, or eyed greedily the rows of golden husking ears that hung drying from the house eaves, like decorations for Hallowe'en. At the end of the double row of houses, in the shade of several linden trees, stood a white church with a square tower on which a gilded weather cock strutted proudly if a little unsteadily.

Standing in the deep porch, I could hear the voice of the pastor. The sermon was in progress. I sat down on one of the benches there opposite a blind beggar. His shreds of garments were bound about his limbs with bits of string and grass strands; his head was reverently bared. There he sat and waited, blinking his sightless eyes, while the voice of the unseen preacher went on. We waited together, the beggar and I—the man who could not see, and the woman who, hearing, could not understand.

The sermon came to an end. There was a rustling, shifting movement, then the voice was raised in prayer. My companion fumbled for his hat, held it out expectantly as the congregation came forth. Of a sudden the dark porch blazed with the glory of brocaded bodices and full linen sleeves ornamented with silver and black with touches of rose, yellow and old blue. The women's snowy headkerchiefs showed the edges of fine lace caps worn close to the head; the dark aprons over the very full, short skirts of figured sateen were marvels of multi-colored embroidery.

They lined up, with many primpings and gigglings, for me to photograph them. At the snap of the shutter, there was a shrill cry of amusement, the line broke and with a flirt of their stiff, outstanding skirts they were off, like one of M. Balieff's choruses.

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I dined with the pastor of Nemečky Grob and his wife. There was also a visiting *pfarer* from Modra. The pastor of Nemečky Grob was a Magyar, though born in Slovakia. His wife, who had the beautiful oval face and delicately arched brows of the pure Slavic races, was a Serb. Their nine year old son, Igor, had been born in Bulgaria. He was not strong, his mother told me. There was a note of apology in her voice. He could not go to school. And he was lazy. Then the enormity of the ignorance of Igor was revealed. At the age of nine he spoke only Slovak, Serbian, Russian and Magyar! One saw that his family felt this paucity of tongues a disgrace. Igor, too, appeared humbled by the admission. He stood shyly by his father's side, while the Slovak maid-servant set the platter of roasted pigeons on the table.

For a time there was no conversation. The pigeons were very good but small, and the bones called for close and concentrated attention. It was the visiting *pfarer* who first pushed aside his plate.

"After all," he said, "there is nothing like meat. It is the food that sticks to a man."

"And *knedlicky*," I suggested, thinking of certain experiences of my own.

"*Knedlicky*, yes. That is good, too, though I am a Slovak and therefore prefer bread. You know we Slo-

vaks have a saying, 'He is like bread,' meaning you can trust that one."

"In my country, that is, among the Serbs," said our hostess, "we say that with bread and honey, paradise comes to the hearth."

"Ah honey . . .," her husband spoke with fervor. "Do you know," he addressed me, "in nine weeks I have eaten thirty-four pounds of honey. All Slovak honey, which, as everyone knows, is the best in the world."

"Surely that is a great deal," I remarked.

"No! Not enough! Everyone should do that. Let me tell you. I was ill, you see, very ill," he laid a hand tenderly on his stomach. "I went to see my doctor. He examined me. 'My man,' he said, 'you are a very sick man. You must at once have an operation.' I was much disturbed when he told me that. Who would not be? I said that I would go to Bratislava to the hospital there.

"Well, I came home and I talked it over with my wife. For three months I lived on milk, nothing but milk. And honey! Thirty-four pounds of honey have I eaten. Then I went to see my doctor. He was delighted to see me. He weighed me and he looked in my eyes and at my tongue. 'Man,' he said, 'you are cured. The operation has performed a miracle.'"

"And did you not tell him that there had been no operation," I asked.

The *pfarer* looked away. "He is a very kind man, my doctor. I like him very much. We often go out shooting together, he with his dog and I with mine. No, I said nothing. And do you know, we are now better friends than ever before."

While I was considering the reasoning that prompted the *pfarrer's* reticence, the visiting *pfarrer*, continuing some line of his own thought, remarked oracularly, "The Serbs and the Slovaks are both Slav peoples. The Czechs, too, but they have become very like the Germans. That is why they do not always understand us who are more purely Slav. They expect us to be like them and we are not and that makes them out of patience. They say that we are lazy and ignorant and obstinate. Perhaps — perhaps. I, myself, am a Slovak, a patriot. But I am not one of those who believe the Slovaks are not without faults. No! No! Think of it, we Slovak Protestants have never made a translation of the Bible for ourselves. We are content to use the Czech translation of the Bible. That is not right."

"Are not the two tongues almost identical?" I said. The little pastor's contention seemed to me like straining at a gnat after swallowing a very bulky camel.

"One thing I have often wondered," the pastor of Nemečky Grob broke in, "about the American *sprache*. Of each Slovak I know who goes to America and returns I have asked this. But none of them can tell me. Is it the same as the English *sprache*? Or is it like Czech and Slovak, Russian and Serb — so alike that you can understand each other's meaning even when the words are different?"

I enlightened him as to the tongue of Shakespeare and Ring Lardner and he expressed his regard for the land of President Dr. Wilson whose photograph hangs with that of Masaryk in every railroad station throughout the Republic.

"This language question presents real difficulties," the *pfarrer* of Nemečky Grob went on. "The government

has made it the law that where more than ten percent of the people in a village are of some nationality other than Slovak, the law courts and the church services, and all public meetings must be held in the tongue of that minority as well as the language of the country. My parishioners number perhaps thirty families. These are divided; some are Slovaks and the others Magyars. It is true they all understand both tongues as well as I. But a law is a law, so in the morning I preach to them in Slovak, in the afternoon I preach to them in Magyar."

"Surely it is possible to translate —" I suggested. But the suggestion was received with dismay. Even Igor gave over sucking his pigeon leg to stare at me in horror. The wife of the pastor enlightened me. Did I not know that the morning's sermon must be drawn from a text in the Gospel, the afternoon's from the Epistle? Were these things so different in America?

After dinner, we set out in search of painted kitchens. The two *pfarers* went with me, each clutching his umbrella. The day was cloudless but these were bulwarks of their dignity and social position. They argued, too, as we went along the short street, which kitchen of Nemečky Grob should be shown the preference, and agreed at last as we came to the house door that the hearth of Katarina Brenzova merited first mention.

The house, like many village dwellings I had already seen, stood with its side to the street. A gate beside the gable end opened into a yard, on which a deep porch and the house door opened. A man was there chopping wood. He stopped with upraised axe at sight of the two *pfarers* and me, eyeing us distrustfully. The *pfarer* of Nemečky Grob explained our errand.

"*Hoja Katarina!*" cried the wood chopper.

Katarina Brenzova appeared in the kitchen door. She was a strong, hard, weather-beaten woman; I have seen her counterpart on sage brush farms in Idaho and in lonely fishing villages in Cornwall. It is a type that transcends race. Her short dark skirt above the high black leather boots was bordered with embroidery in crimson and orange, her kirtle of dark silk showed stitchery of silver, her sleeves glowed with rose and blue embroidery, a tight lace cap with floating ribbons bound her hair, and more gaily flowered ribbons were knotted at her neck.

Again our errand was explained. She stood aside, motioning us to come into the house.

The door opened directly into the kitchen. A stove of white porcelain tiles filled the deep chimney. Above this, painted on the flat, white wall, was a fan-shaped decoration as gorgeous and as exquisitely balanced as the spread tail of a peacock. The colors that predominated were crimson, purple, magenta and blue, and these were mingled in an intricate pattern of tulips, buds and leaves and delightful exotic birds.

Nor did the decoration stop there. The same design had been adapted to a band two feet deep which ran around four sides of the room on the level of one's shoulder. Above this hung dozens of plates and platters and jugs of Modra pottery.

The glow of that rich and lively decoration lighted the low-ceiled room. I cried out with sheer delight. Katarina Brenzova regarded me gravely without smile or self-consciousness.

"It all comes out of her head," said her husband and he patted the top of her crown in a burst of proud proprietorship.

This art, which seems to us so unusual, is regarded throughout Slovakia as one of woman's natural attributes. Every wife is expected not only to cook, sew, embroider her own and her husband's garments, to plant, reap, thresh grain, till the fields, and shall need arise, harness herself with the family cow to the plough, but to be a creative artist with paint and pencil. It is her duty in the first winter of her marriage to decorate the family hearth. If the house is one where her mother-in-law has lived, a portion of the old design is left. It is not unusual to find houses in which the work of four or five generations of women appear on the walls. Though the patterns they paint are often traditional, handed down from mother to daughter, each woman adapts and modifies and enriches the old designs with her own meanings.

Katarina Brenzova's art extended beyond the kitchen. In the company room a frieze ran around the walls below the ceiling, and bands of rich floral designs framed doors and windows. The benches that were built into the corners, a tall wooden cupboard, and a chest, were richly ornamented with conventionalized tulips. The walls of that room were also hung with plates, and between them four large, colored oleographs in painted glass frames. From the left wall President Masaryk and General Štefanik stared out of countenance the old emperor, Franz Josef, and their majesties Charles and Zita. Katarina Brenzova's loyalty was beyond question. To her, one suspected, it was the frames that mattered most.

I think she saw that my admiration was sincere, for presently she unlocked the chest and drew forth a large square portfolio. She spread this open on the top of the chest. It held more than a score of cartoons, designs

for the embroidery of sleeves and bodices, bedspreads and men's shirts, designs to be placed over hearths and for chests and cupboard doors. The patterns were rich and varied; flowers, birds and grotesque beasts were joined in a tracery of leaves and tendrils, as one sees these in the carvings on Gothic choir stalls and capitals. All these were the work of this silent, weather-beaten woman whose hands were hard and horny with thirty years of toil.

She spoke no German and I so little Slovak that we could only look at each other. But the look held volumes. She reached for a scrap of paper and with a stub of pencil that she took from her bodice she began to draw, not with the fumbling sketchy strokes of the dilettante, but with surety and consciousness of power. On that crumpled scrap of paper bag bloomed a nosegay, just such a one as flamed on the cupboard door and the benches . . . only this one was mine.

The road led straight away from Nemečky Grob across the corn lands to Trnava. We found the town *en fête* for the coming of the cardinal archbishop of Zagreb. Garlands of spruce boughs wreathed the station and hung from the façade of the seventeenth century Town Hall, where preparations for a banquet were in progress. More spruce boughs and the words VITAME VAS, in rosettes of red paper adorned the tall square tower on the market place. It was a relic of sterner times with a sentinel's gallery about the top under the red painted dome.

Trnava wears its crimson domes like cardinals wear hats. They crown the towers of the great Gothic church of St. Nicholas that was built in the fourteenth century



THE CONGREGATION OF NEMEČKY GROB



KATARINA BRENZOVA



NEW WINE FOR SALE IN MODRA



THE CHURCH OF THE THREE VIRGINS IN
TRNAVA

and still shows traces of fine old frescoes of that period. Trnava is one of the oldest towns of Slovakia and dates from the sixth century. Memories of the ancient city remain in the Romanesque Church of the Three Virgins with its pentagonal chapels and ancient Slavic crosses of fine wrought iron. From niches over the door the three great ladies look down, smiling gently. . . . Mary, Virgin Mother, Agnes cradling her lamb, and Lucy lifting high her lamp. In the middle ages Trnava was a trading center of the Fuggers. The ruin of their stronghold rises on a hill outside the town.

But Trnava is not all of the past. The modern note was struck in a sign over a window filled with woman's headgear; *Parizky Modelovy*.

The white tower and dark dome of old Nitra on its rocky promontory, and newer Nitra around its base, were visible for many kilometers across the flat plain. Here, tradition avers, Cyril and Methodius, the brother evangelists from Byzantium, rested and established the first Christian church among the Slovaks. Čak Matus ruled from Nitra's citadel and made the town his mint.

Today Nitra wears the mantle of ecclesiasticism. Its streets rang with church bells. Black cassocked figures strolled under the plane trees on its brief promenade. I thought they eyed a bit askance the open landau wound with smilax and white carnations in which a smiling bride in white satin and a blushing-to-the-ears groom, hatless and in full evening dress, drove hand in hand about the streets in the midafternoon glare to announce their approaching marriage.

This seems to be a custom among the upper and middle classes. The peasant bride, on the day before her

marriage, makes the tour of the village carrying a cake. She offers a slice of this to each one of her neighbors and bids them to her wedding.

Old Nitra keeps to its rocky hilltop. It is a steep drive up to the heavy barricaded walls with their double gates still showing portcullis and drawbridge. Outside the first of these, in a little ark, stands a gilded statue of the Virgin, and over the gate appear the arms of Thomas Palfy, Bishop of Nitra in the days of Leopold I., with attendant lion and dragon. In the dark of the archway and high in the wall on the level of a rider's eyes, appears a head of Janus as finely carved as an intaglio, with the pledge: CURAT.

Thomas Palfy, before he was Bishop of Nitra, was a scion of the old fighting Magyar stock, and after he wore the mitre, a humanist and a patron of the Renaissance. One wonders to which of these guardians at his gate he pinned his faith.

The castle elbows the cathedral on one side and on the other side stands the clumsy building of a seminary. Parts of the church date from the ninth century, a time when Nitra was the cultural center of Svatopluk's empire. A deep moat, dry now and used by Thomas Palfy's prudent successor as a sty for his pigs, runs round the apse with its strong Romanesque pilasters and capitals and quaint, weather-beaten apocalyptic beasts. A flight of steps set with statues and overhung with vines leads to the south door.

I tried the door but it was locked. From somewhere within the venerable pile came the sound of choristers singing. I rattled the door handle of wrought iron with the head of a crowned dragon. The door remained firm, but a window in what I took to be the sacristy was

raised. A disapproving clerical face appeared at the aperture, a finger was lifted admonishingly, then the window was brought down with a bang that betokened finality.

The long shadows of the afternoon filled the green valley through which the little Nitra comes lazily to meet the Vah. We followed its windings up into the soft folds of the Innovecke hills whose other side looks on the Považie.

It is a peaceful, idyllic valley. No hint of war alarms, no march of armies have violated its serenity. The castles rising on the hillsides are mere country houses, white walled and generous, the forests come close about them, and below in the valley are the green pasture lands where sheep graze, and flax is grown along the borders of the Nitra, and where the peasant women spin and weave at their house doors like grave browned Penelopes. These are the lands of the Palffy's, great folk of Hungary in the days of Hungary's magnificence, magnates and Palatines and councillors of kings.

In the hills to the right lies Topolčianky, where stands the little castle which is the summer retreat of President Masaryk.

The sun was setting when we drove into Prievidzia. An avenue of poplars leads down a hill and up another to the old ramparts of Bojnecks, the hamlet that girdles the castle of the lords of Palffy. Village and castle live on familiar terms; the geese of both mingle and fight for place in the feeble trickle of water that emerges from the castle demesne and trickles down the ditch between the opposing row of cottages, providing bath, laundry and duck pond for the villagers.

Bits of old ramparts with bulging bastions tell that this tiny hamlet was once a strongly fortified place. The church, which is said to date from the fourteenth century, has walls ten feet thick and stoutly buttressed, all covered now with many layers of whitewash. Within, two ancient wooden statues of Aaron and Moses, of heroic size and with traces of fourteenth century painting, hold up the wooden gallery. They represent the Law Spiritual beside the Law Temporal of the Palfy's ornate black and gilded tombs and hatchments with many quarterings.

Palfy Castle is a page torn from the Brothers Grimm. Its conical red towers lift above the tops of dark firs; its deep moat, long dry, is planted with ivy and rock plants to form a romantic sunken garden into which one looks from the drawbridge; in its curving courtyard, within the first battlemented wall, the present count's foresters in their green livery stroll about and play at bowls and chaff the serving maids. On a rock in the wall is carved the Palfy arms and this proud dedication:

TO THE MEMORY OF ANCIENT GLORY.

The castle is still the summer home of the family which, like many another Hungarian and Austrian house, owned vast estates in what is now Czechoslovakia. The republican government, while it has taken a toll of hectares of land from each of these feudal landholders, has otherwise left the families undisturbed. The aim has been to dissolve great estates in order to permit proprietorship by large numbers of citizens. Under the land reform laws more than one million acres have been expropriated, and nearly half a million new land owners have been created.

The living quarters of Palfy Castle contain no fewer

than two hundred and eighteen rooms. These are filled with magnificent furnishings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The holder of the title in the reign of Franz Josef restored and re-established the great pile on its present scale. And, though post-war conditions made necessary not long ago the sale of the castle's chief art treasures, enough remain to prove that the ancient glory of the Palffys is not all a matter for memory.

Tradition avers that the castle dates from the fifth century. Its day of greatness came with the Palatine Count, John Palffy, who was the champion and counsellor of the young empress Maria Theresa. He lies buried in the ornate chapel of the castle, and among the family treasures is the sword and the ring sent to him by his young royal mistress with her own favorite charger at a moment when the fortunes of the dual monarchy were at low ebb. Still carefully preserved is this note in her own handwriting:

“Father Palffy:

I send you this horse, worthy of being mounted by none but the most zealous of my faithful servants. Receive at the same time a sword to defend me against my enemies and take this ring as a token of my affection for you.

Maria Theresa”

I lodged that night as a paying guest of the Lord of Palffy. The park falls away abruptly from the height on which the castle stands and, in a tiny dell within sight of the proud towers and sound of the castle clock, a hot sulphur spring gives excuse for a small *kupele*.

The Palffys built the establishment on conventual

lines. One enters, through a gate, a long close that is planted with trees and beds of scarlet sage, where a fountain splashes softly under an old tulip tree. In the long right wing, one story high, are the guest rooms opening from an echoing, brick-floored corridor. In the opposite wing are the baths. The short connecting building houses the dining-rooms and offices.

What is there about a cloister that makes its appeal to the least ascetic of us? Here, I thought, I will stay a long, long time—for sixty cents a day. At night, I shall open my window to watch the ordered procession of the faithful stars over the castle towers and to breathe the fragrance of the forest. By day, I shall pace up and down this quiet, green close and think long, long thoughts. Here, I will meditate on Life and Death and Man's destiny. . . . I will weigh the universe in my hand. . . .

Božena thrust her head in at my door. "If the gracious one will bathe, let it be at once!" She handed me a shift of brown linen. "The bath lies across the court. Let the gracious one make ready. I will come!"

I followed the short path between the beds of salvia and opened the door to which it led. This gave without prelude upon a pool some thirty feet square, from which rose a steam of warm, sulphury water. In the *bad*, which was nowhere more than four feet deep, a young man, shiftless and content, disported himself.

I stammered apologetically and was about to withdraw, but he waved to me encouragingly and pointed to a row of tiny cubicles on the order of dog kennels, each with a low door through which the bather wriggled into the water.

To date, Pieštany had been my one experience of Czechoslovakian spas. And Pieštany has forfeited its national characteristics in becoming a world resort. From all that I had been told, I knew that at the small *kupeles*, of which Slovakia alone has more than two hundred, bathing is conducted on simple and communal lines and with an innocent intimacy which outdoes the bathing beaches of America.

I chose my cubicle and unfolded the linen bathing chemise Božena had presented to me. It reached mid-way to my knees. . . . After all, I reflected, recalling the tales of other travellers, in Japan . . . in Sweden . . .

Then the outer door was flung wide, Božena's voice lifted in horror: "Gracious one, what are you doing?" And with a wail of dismay which arose not from any scruples about mixed bathing: "You have come to the second class establishment!"

After all, the first-class pool held no more cubic feet of water and it had four other bathers to the second class pool's one. I have yet to discover what difference in appointments made the distinction of five crowns between them.

Two stout ladies, a stout gentleman with the crispness of his moustaches carefully preserved in a rubber bandage, and a tonsured head with very round eyes and a surprised looking nose, that bobbed on the water to all appearances bodiless, were already *im bad*. The four heads inclined to me formally as I, too, descended into the sulphury steam.

"Twenty minutes," said Božena sternly, and shut the door upon us.

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What, I wondered, is the etiquette of the *kupele*? The Epicureans on similar occasions indulged in philosophic discourse. Not so the five bathers of Bojnecke. Silent and solemn, and clad in our pinafores of brown linen, like so many orphans, we soaked in unison until Božena, who had hung an alarm clock like a chatelaine from her capacious waist, appeared on the brink and beckoned one after the other of us from the bath.





PALFFY CASTLE IS LIKE A PAGE OUT OF GRIMM



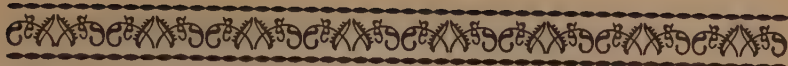
BOJNICKY KUPELE



HOUSES IN ČIČMANY WITH PAINTED FRONTS



THE DRESS OF ČIČMANY IS ALL YELLOW AND WHITE



CHAPTER FIVE

ČIČMANY AND FORTY GOLDEN CROWNS



O one at Bojnecke could tell me much about Čičmany. It was vaguely "through the forests" in a general northerly direction. Oh yes, there was a road. Of sorts. A car was found with a driver who confessed to having been there once. He guessed the distance from Bojnecke to

Čičmany to be about thirty kilometers.

The railway guide assured me that from Čičmany there was a motor bus connection to Rajec, a town on a branch line to Žilina. And what I already knew of Slovakia told me that Čičmany was one of the places not to be missed on any account . . . roads, drivers, forests and uncertainty about how, once there, to get away from it again to the contrary.

So for Čičmany we started.

True to the driver's gloomy foreboding, the road died a lingering death shortly after we left Nemečke Pravno, the village beyond Prievidza. In its place there was just a cart track, deeply rutted. The driver swung round

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in his seat and regarded me as though to say, "I told you so."

The hills closed down on us. Deep, silent fir forests threatened the narrow track on either side. Where a thin shaft of sunlight struck the road's edge, grew clusters of orange and crimson mushrooms, and the frail blue and white bells of the *campanula carpatica*, a native, as the name implies.

These dense forests fill the angle that is formed by the Vah in its southward flow from Žilina to Trenčín, and the Turiec which flows almost parallel to the Vah, but in the opposite direction, to join it at Vrutky. No roads find their way over these forested hills and through the deep silent valleys. The brown bear and the wild boar keep their sovereignty unchallenged.

Once, from somewhere in the forest, we heard the ringing sound of an axe and, farther on, we rounded a curve and came to a small clearing, where a great tree had been felled and a man and a woman clad in tattered garments of heavy linen, the woman's blooming at shoulders and hem with yellow embroidery, worked a long, double-handled saw. Two forked sticks had been set up in the ground and from a third stick that rested on them hung a loop of linen in which a baby lay and stared up into the pine boughs.

They did not stop their sawing to stare at us; yet surely, motors are not frequent on that wood road. Anyone who is accustomed to the eager and vociferous curiosity about strangers that prevails among the peasants of the Latin races must be struck by the stolidity of the Slovaks. These people are dulled into an apathetic acceptance which takes wonders no less for granted than the facts of every day. The Italian and

the Spanish peasant may be as poor and often as hungry, but he has not always at his heels the ever present menace of winter. It is those long months of biting cold and heavy snows forever lying in wait for the summer's small gains that rob these people of hopefulness. The Slovaks rely for occupation almost entirely upon agriculture and lumbering. There are not one dozen factories in the whole thirty thousand square miles that comprise Slovakia. Those that were there prior to 1914 were subsidies of the Hungarian government and have not survived the change of régime. And that becomes one of Slovakia's most frequent causes of complaint against the Czechs . . . that while she suffers for dire want of industrialism, Bohemia has a surfeit of factories and floods the towns east of the Vah with her goods.

Čičmany lies cupped in a vale between the forests. Its houses, built of logs, many of them painted with fantastic designs of whitewash, crowd together as though for protection against the wild. The crowding has been very nearly their undoing. Ten years ago a fire swept through the hamlet, destroying fifty houses. Fortunately, from the artist's, if not from the humanitarian's point of view, when the householders rebuilt they kept to the old models. They overhung their lower stories with deep galleries; they raised high peaked gables which they carved or painted with garlands and decorative arrangements of the name Maria. They limned the logs with whitewash following designs as old as Krok the chieftain. In much of this peasant decoration there appears a peculiar waving line — the line of the Slav's wandering. From the ridge pole of one cottage a cock carved out of richly weathered pine lifted his crowing head toward the East.

Čičmany's sole connection with the outside world is through Rajec fifteen miles to the north. Because of its isolation, the village remains the most picturesque and unique of all the forest villages of Slovakia. Here one finds not only the distinctive costume and embroidery of the women, but customs and superstitions that have survived from pagan times.

No New Year is ushered in without each householder making the rounds of his house and byre to stuff beans in the cracks between the logs as charms against fire. No Čičmany bride goes to her marriage without first being seated on the kneading trough in the dooryard in the presence of the married women of the village, while her mother dresses her hair preparatory to putting on the lace cap and the magnificent embroidered linen head-dress which are the badge of her new estate. Before this can be done, however, three locks of her hair must be cut off, burned, and then a pinch of the ash thrown to each of the four points of the compass.

No Christmas is kept without each house being newly cleaned and the floor spread with new straw, laid carefully from east to west. And while the priest's man is ringing the church bell, the father of each family pours for each member a portion of homemade plum wine, not omitting first to pour a few drops on the floor as a libation to the gods whose day is past.

The car deposited me before the general store and *hostinec* of Josef Glazel. This, with the church and the fine new school of brick, with a tablet honouring General Stefanik, represents Čičmany's public life. Josef Glazel himself, collarless and in his shirt sleeves, stood in the doorway. He was a Hungarian Jew, as are so many of



A MATRON OF ČIČMANY IN HER FESTAL DRESS



DOWN A SLOVAK VILLAGE STREET

the innkeepers in the villages of Slovakia. The old government at Budapest made concessions to the Jews with the result that there is scarcely a village north of the Danube, except those founded by German colonists, where financial affairs and business is not in their hands. Where there is very little money to change hands and trade is barter and exchange, the storekeeper on whom all must rely for the necessities of flour and salt becomes invested with the power and the prestige of a Visconti. The Jews of Slovakia and Ruthenia are great linguists. They speak not only Yiddish, Magyar, Polish and the Slavic dialects, but always German, which is the language of commerce throughout Central Europe.

In reply to my question whether I could stay at the inn that night, Josef Glazel turned around and dealt several resounding kicks at the side of the house. "Služka!" he shouted.

A slatternly girl came around the house. She wore moccasins of white wool, a narrow white linen skirt over which hung two embroidered aprons, one before and one behind, and over the tightly drawn underbodice, a loose blouse with embroidered shoulders, made to hang in a fluted bertha over the breast.

The innkeeper and she entered into a long conversation that was punctuated by suspicious looks at me. I waited humbly while my fate for that night hung in the balance.

Evidently they came to some agreement, for presently Josef Glazel turned to me and said, "She will get the room ready for you. You can leave your bag here." He stowed my dressing case away behind the bar in the *hostinec's* main room.

I asked about the motor bus connection to Rajec and

was told that the bus would arrive in Čičmany soon after four that afternoon and would make its return trip at five the next morning. This, despite the schedule laid down in the railroad guide, was its only trip in the day.

The morrow was August fourteenth which Slovakia celebrates as the Feast of the Assumption of Panny Marie. I had made careful calculation to be in Čičmany on that day to see the gathering in the church at a time when all the village would be in festal dress. To be forced to leave at five in the morning would be to miss all that I had travelled through the forests to see.

I confided this to Josef Grazel and he offered to arrange with the bus driver to make an extra trip the next day, in the early afternoon, taking me to Rajec to catch the five o'clock train to Žilina.

"But it will cost you one hundred and ten crowns," he said guardedly.

"So be it," I replied.

After one has already embarked on rash extravagances in the way of hired motors and chauffeurs, is one to stop at chartering a whole motor bus for an extra trip of sixty kilometers at a cost of three dollars and thirty cents?

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After all, Čičmany did not offer much in the way of diversion. One could scarcely imagine anything more primitive. Its three score or more of log cottages straggled along the rutted forest road which, here, had a brook running down the middle of it. Piles of logs lay about suggesting future building operations. Each cottage was divided from its neighbor by a high fence of woven branches like crude basket work and on these

the family garments were spread to air in readiness for the morrow's feast. All these were of the coarse handwoven white linen, and all, even to the shift of the smallest child, were worked with the characteristic *haedebo* embroidery in the Čičmany colors of white and yellow.

The men of the settlement and most of the women were at work in the forest. Only a few children and many geese paddled about contentedly in the muddy brook.

From the gable over the inn door came the sound of a scrubbing brush being wielded with vigor. Evidently the *Služka* was making a place there for me. Presently a window was thrown wide, there was a warning "*hoja!*" and a bucket of water was flung into the road.

I determined to go for a walk.

When I came back from the forest it was to sniff the smell of wood smoke that told of suppers in preparation. The village had come alive with sunset. Josef Glazel moved like a Caesar among his barrels and sacks. The bell over the shop door kept up an incessant tinkle as the village women came and went and made their purchases against the holiday. They stepped softly in their white heelless moccasins. Their bodies were clothed like the *služka's* in white linen, and their heads were dressed in caps of crocheted lace into which the hair was wound on either side, to form two stiff outstanding horns. These became a support for the outstanding embroidered linen headdresses which would be their glory on the following day.

The servant had set my supper of fried veal and sliced cucumbers and beer in a dark little cubby hole

off the inn's common room. She kept popping in from the kitchen at intervals and the innkeeper, whenever his duties in the store would admit, kept appearing at the opposite door, as though to keep a wary eye on the inn's one guest. The meal progressed in a series of jerks and nods and broken fragments of conversation.

On one of these appearances Josef Glazel asked if I wished to buy any of the local embroideries.

I said I might.

"Good," he nodded with satisfaction. "Leave all to me. In the morning you shall have many blouses from which to choose."

Then, as though the prospect of this trade opened the way to ask the question which had been burning on his lips: "Why have you come here?"

The friendly Foreign Office in Prague, in giving me a railroad pass, had given me as well a general letter of introduction, written in Czech, an official paper of the Hradčany. In this communication, which was beyond my power to read, I was set down as a *spisovatelka*. I was content to take the balance of the letter on trust, but I argued if I and the *spisovatelka* were one and the same, it behooved me to know what the profession of this entailed. Feril and Jaromir had enlightened me. A *spisovatelka*, they said, was a writer; a literary person; even, a bit awefully, "a journalist."

Now, to the Czech mind with its highly developed reverence for education, a professor is the highest of all mundane glories, with the journalist running a close second. The *spisovatelka* seemed to weigh favorably with Josef Glazel.

"You are not the first American to stay here," he informed me. "There was once an artist, an *academische*

malerin from Chicago." He brought the inn's register and showed the name. It was a foreign name, Czech or Slovak, I decided. "It is strange that so many Americans wish to come to Čičmany." He seemed to see his inn suddenly on the highroad of tourist travel.

A tinkle of the shop bell called him back to his counter. Shortly after, a tall man in the white trousers and long loose coat, braided in black, that is the wear of the men in this region came in through the *hostinec*. At sight of me he took off his hat. "Good night, Mrs." he said.

"You speak English!" I exclaimed.

He nodded. "I was in America for eight years. In Chicago." He sat down on the bench opposite to me and began to talk. They had told him in the village that there was an *Američanka* at the *hostinec*. He had come with that simple and touching courtesy which is a mark of the Slovak peasantry to bid me welcome to Čičmany.

His stock of English was rapidly diminishing, for it was now five years since he had been in America. When he had come back it was for a visit only, but the difficulties of the American immigration laws, perhaps, too, the tug of home at his heart strings, had kept him in Čičmany. The old life had taken him back. In Chicago he had worked in the railroad yards, now he swung his axe in the forest. One son was still in America and doing well. Two others had gone recently to France.

There is in recent years a decided trend of Slovak emigration into France. The Slovak is a born traveller. Not for nothing does the wander line adorn their house fronts. But, though they set forth willingly enough, many, many of them, like Jiří Brožík of Čičmany, re-

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turn, true to their proverb, "*Everywhere is good, but home is best.*"

"There are now forty men of Čičmany in America," said Jiří Brožík. "If only we had factories here we would not have to emigrate."

Josef Glazel here made one of his periodic appearances.

"If there were factories here there would be work, *ja*," he said shrewdly. "But the wages would not be so high as in America."

I thought of the forty Čičmany men in America and the dollars they send to their families in Slovakia, and the proportion of these that must find their way into Josef Glazel's strong box. It is significant that in the most remote and primitive villages of Slovakia the American dollar bill is as well known and as readily accepted as the coin or paper of the Czechoslovak republic. I once saw two Roumanian Jews, who boarded the train at the frontier station of Marmaros Sighet without tickets, offer to pay their passage in a collection of currency that included Roumanian, Hungarian, Polish and Serbian bank notes, and American dollar bills. And of this array, the conductor — wisely — chose the American money.

The man who had been in America seemed to be considering the storekeeper's remark. "*Ano*," he said, "America is better. But it is not so beautiful."

I suppose eight years lived in the tenement districts of Chicago and the Illinois Central freight yards do not give one an adequate appreciation of our "woods and templed hills."

It was now half past eight in the evening and Čičmany was dark and silent. Josef Glazel began locking up with

much clanking of keys. Jiří Brožík shook my hand, and tramped away into the blackness.

Josef Glazel now lighted a candle, took up my bag and opened a low door that gave on a tiny passage between the *hostinec* and his own living quarters. From the passage a ladder nailed flat against the wooden wall led to the loft. He led the way up this and I followed, rung on rung.

The loft filled the front gable of the house. The *služka* had done her work well. The unpainted boards, newly scrubbed, smelled of the forest that bore them. Josef Glazel waited for me to remove my shoes, then leaving me the candle and taking the shoes to be cleaned, he descended the ladder.

The bedstead, like others I had encountered in the course of these wanderings, was fitted with a mattress stuffed with coarse straw. The lumps and the scratchinesses had a way of making themselves felt even through the sheet of heavy, hand-woven linen. For covering, there was a huge bag of red cotton filled with goose feathers over which the upper sheet was buttoned securely. Though it was August, the forest night was too cool to sleep comfortably without covering. But all those feathers. . . . They had, moreover, as I was to discover, a way of moving cunningly as one slept. Of creeping up from the lower portion of the bag to the end about the sleeper's neck until one dreamed of suffocation in hot steam baths, and woke in horror and fought desperately to push the crowding feathers back into their rightful place in that portion of the *decke* now entirely empty which lay over one's feet.

As I struggled to smooth a nest in the hummocky straw below me and to find a breathing space among the feathers which pressed on me from above, I felt that I

knew all the sensations of a newly hatched chick in a haymow.

The church of Čičmany occupies a grassy knoll beyond the houses close to where the forests begin. It is old, old — perhaps thirteenth century — of whitewashed stone with a square tower above the door. Its walls sag and bulge and threaten to drop from weariness, and the villagers have propped them up on the outside with leaning tree trunks — calling in the forest to the aid of their souls.

Very early on the morning of that Lady Day the path up the knoll was filled with a procession of white clad figures. The older women came first. Their lace caps were now covered solemnly with long veils of fine white linen damask without embroidery. These hung below the waist and were held out from the face by the horns of their coiffures. The effect of that company of white shrouded figures was strangely oriental . . . like a gathering of Moslem women.

Who can tell what ancient tradition decrees that after five or six years of marriage a wife shall lay away her golden headdress and swathe herself in humble, unadorned, white linen.

As they passed into the church, they moved first to the altar of Panny Marie that had been decked with flowers and pine boughs for her feast. On the altar stood a small bell. Each suppliant, as she approached, struck the bell as though to announce her arrival at the heavenly portals, then knelt to pray before finding a place in the pews.

In all the village churches of Slovakia the pews on one side are reserved for the women, those on the other for the men. Gradually these filled. On the men's side I

noticed Jiří Brožík. More came, and more, and still more. The bell in the tower began to peal, then, from a side door, entered a company of young girls in their glowing white and yellow. Their heads were uncovered and the long braids were wound with cerise ribbons. They took their places standing about the altar rail.

The bell had ceased its summons. There was a stir; then, marching up the aisle, came the young married women of the village in the glory of their bridal dress. Their blouses, snowy white and glowing with yellow embroidery, their double aprons marvels of lace and ribbon and fine stitchery, their heads crowned with the distinctive wide-standing, linen headdresses worked in bright yellow silk that are the pride of Čičmany. Čičmany goes crowned while every other village of Slovakia covers its women's heads with humble kerchiefs.

They came proudly, two score of them, many with babies in their arms which they handed over to the older women in the benches to care for while the young matrons remained standing in the aisle between the very tall black and gold lanterns that are carried for the dead, and the ceremonial banners of green and blue and purple that flanked the pews.

That unstaged pageantry took your breath.

But now the girls about the altar rail began to sing. Their voices, unaccompanied by any instrument, rose shrill and sweet and filled with fervent devotion. One verse they sang of the pæon of Panny Marie, then the matrons took up the next verse, to be answered antiphonally by the deeper, softer choir of the older folk in the pews.

Father Stefan mounted the altar steps; the Mass began.

That was Jiří Brožík's day. After Mass, when the matrons who had household cares on their minds had filed out and scattered down the green slope like blown daisies, there was a christening. The man who had been in America and his son-in-law shared between them the honor of the tightly swathed bundle. A faint, very thin wail greeted Father Stefan's touch upon its brow and its name — Matej. And in response to that wail, all the older women, who had lingered in the church for this additional ceremony, drew deep sighs of satisfaction and relief. What chance had the devil now?

The proud father led the procession back to the house with the grandfather following close after. As they reached the door, Jiří Brožík took the bundle into his own arms. He walked around the house, stopping at each of the four sides to lift the infant Matej to that point of the compass while he recited solemnly:

“ Out of the North comes winter;
 Out of the East the high wind;
 Out of the South come heat and drought;
 Out of the West the night that overtakes all men.

On every side, Christian, beware of evil. Trust in God, in Him alone.”

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Later I went to call on the young mother. She lay smiling proudly in the built-in bed in the corner of the kitchen. The very long linen curtain, which from the moment of the child's birth until its christening had hung about the bed and shielded mother and babe from the sight of all, was now looped back. Every Slovak

woman has at least one "birth curtain" in her dower chest, longer and fuller and more elaborately embroidered than those used on the beds at other times. Was it not because Panny Marie hid the infant *Jezisek* behind just such a curtain that He escaped the soldiers of Herod?

I noticed a long wooden trough, rather like a crude cradle, that hung from the rafters. This was not, I learned, for Matej, but the family bread box. In it were piled a dozen or so of great round loaves as hard as millstones, and nearly as heavy.

True to ancient Slavic custom, the Brožiks offered me bread and salt in token of hospitality and a glass of the acid plum wine which is the drink of ceremony.

Father Stefan and I dined together in the inn's cubby hole. The squawks and screechings which had roused me from slumber that morning were explained by the pair of roasted goslings which, with a compote of plums, formed our feast.

While we were still at table the motor bus arrived with a toot and a clatter and a welcoming "*Hoja!*" from all the children of the village. It was time to go.

I took my place in the ramshackle vehicle, and to my surprise eight or nine young girls and a corresponding number of youths crowded in after me and ranged themselves on the long seats. Boys on one side, girls, giggling a little self-consciously and preening their Lady Day finery, on the other.

Josef Glazel shook hands, the Brožiks shook hands, the *služka*, wiping red arms on an apron I coveted for its lace and embroidery, ducked a sort of curtsy. The bus started.

The boys and girls sat very still and quite silent as we drove through the forest. It is fifteen miles from Čičmany to Rajec and half that distance is through deep woods and over a road only slightly better than that which had carried me from Prievidza to Čičmany.

Where the forests end, we came into a green valley on which the Mala Fatras marshalled their forested hills. The bus stopped, the boys and girls descended, each coming first to shake hands with me, to murmur: "*Tesi mne velice.*" (It gives me much pleasure.) Then, two and two, they turned to walk back the seven miles to Čičmany. It seemed that I was treating Čičmany's younger generation to one-half of a holiday excursion.





CHAPTER SIX

ONION DOMES ALONG THE HRON



BUT," said the Lily, a long time afterward, "how did you know where to go?"

Well, how does anyone?

I once knew a traveller who picked out all the places with names beginning with T——, that being his own initial. He went to those and was sat-

isfied. And once, in Provence, I came across a taciturn Englishman with a copy of "Tartarin of Tarascon" in one pocket and "The Joyous Adventures of Aristide Pujol" in the other. He was taking a six weeks holiday "doing" the towns mentioned in those two books.

I don't know but his method of travel is as good a way as any.

Most of my discovering in Slovakia so far had been done by luck and wayside gleanings. Someone in Trenčín told me about something in Nitra; the Palfy trail picked up in Nitra led to Bojnecke. A Hungarian engineer with whom I talked on the train from Krnov to Žilina gave me the legend of Čachtice. And so it went.

Now a letter sent to a stranger, an American stationed

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in Banska Bystrica for the International Y. M. C. A. asking about market days in Zvolen *zupa*, brought the response:

"Be at Žilina station on Friday morning when the night express from Prague comes in. Come packed and ready to go on to Banska Bystrica. There—" The letter held out the promise of a welcome from an American wife who was hungry to talk U. S. A., two adorable small children, a comfortable hotel, the professorial nephew of the poet Hurban-Vajansky "who knows everything about Banska and Slovakia and delights to share that knowledge," and the loveliest white-towered, grey-domed town in the Tatras.

"And that," as I explained to the Lily, "is how I came to go to Banska Bystrica."

It was still very early when the Hotel Remi's sleepy-eyed porter, who managed, though he was as fully clad as at any hour of the day, to look somehow undressed, carried my luggage across the square to the station.

On the floor of the waiting-room amid bulging linen bundles, live fowls tied by the legs in bunches of six or eight, and hampers of tomatoes, crouched a group of Dětvals. They had waited all night for the train from Prague. The men in their full white linen trousers like skirts, black jackets, high crowned felt hats and broad leather belts bound with brass stood in a stiff, silent group while the women drowsed. Their frilled white headkerchiefs nodded like heavy-headed poppies. Against the doorway of the dark, crowded, ill-smelling waiting room leaned a young girl, lithe and lovely in her bodice of crimson brocade stitched with silver from which the full puffs of her white lace sleeves stood out

like a butterfly's wings. She stood and looked away to the East with the morning in her face.

Beyond Vrutky we turned down into the green and gentle valley of the Turiec that the Slovaks call the "Garden of Slovakia."

Sloping fields led up to the forest line. Orchards of plum and pear trees girdled the white hamlets. A woman in a tight white linen jacket over a blue skirt, and a full cap of crimson and blue embroidery herded some sheep down a road. The vale between the two ridges of the Tatras seemed to smile benignly.

This valley is the home of the poets. Here in the village of Mosovce was born Jan Kollar whose "Daughter of Slava" rings with fiery protest against Magyar domination. Kollar wrote entirely in Czech for in his time, just a century ago, the Slovaks had not a written language. Their achievement of this was largely the work of the educators Ludovit Stur and J. M. Hurban, the poets Ondrej Sladkovic, Pavol Orszagh, better known under his pseudonym of Hviezdoslav, and of Svetozar Hurban-Vajansky, the son of J. M. Hurban, and the historical novelist Janko Kalnicak, who is the Walter Scott of the land of the Vah and the Tatras.

These men gathered at Turčiansky Svätý Martin, "St. Martin's Town-on-the-Turiec," and formed there the cultural and political society Matica Slovenska. There Slovak independence was discussed long before the assassination of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand in Sarajevo opened the way to its realization.

It is significant that both in Bohemia and Slovakia the seeds of national rebirth should have been sown, not by politicians, but by groups of literati.

Of the group at Svätý Martin, Hurban-Vajansky was

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the most imposing figure and indeed the most influential of all Slovak writers of prose and verse. He felt strongly the influence of the Russians, particularly Turgenev, and up to his death in 1916 he still believed ardently in a great Pan-Slav state directed by Russia. His opposition to the Bohemians, whose Slavism has been impregnated by German thought, and to the vigorous nationalistic policies of Masaryk, have caused his writings to be rather discredited by the Czechs since the republic became a fact.

It is a nice question whether the poets who sang on its banks inspired the waters of the Turiec to patriotism, or vice versa. During the Kossuth rebellion of 1848 a band of Hungarian revolutionists were pursued down this valley by an Austrian patrol. They dropped their banner into the river and escaped singly into the hills. Soon after, some Slovak peasants drew the standard out of the water and lo! the Turiec with prophetic power had changed the Hungarian national colors of red, white and green to the red, white and blue of the Slovak national party. "An omen!" they cried, and carried the banner proudly into Svaty Martin and hung it in the town museum where you may see it to this day.

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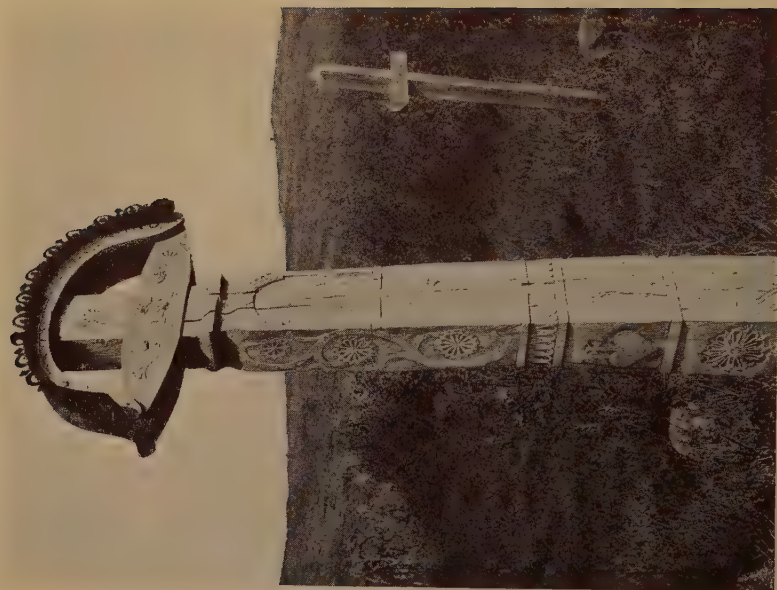
Below Svaty Martin the valley narrows and the hills begin. Somewhere in those forests to the right lies Čičmany. On the left, the ridge of the Velka Tatra bounds the higher, nobler rise of the Nizke Tatry. Romantic and secret intervalles, the *dolinas* of the Slovak folk songs, lead away between the forests. The line mounts steadily, curves and twists, each curve giving new views of green hills and forests and sudden deep,



THERE'S A TOUCH OF THE ORIENT ABOUT BANSKA
BYSTRICA



THE SHEPHERD LAD OF DĚTVA PLAYS HIS PIPE



AN ANCIENT CARVED CROSS IN THE CHURCH-
YARD — DĚTVA

narrow chasms where little streams run briskly. A romantic terrain, this land of the Vah and the Tatras.

From the highest rise, one looks down into a deep green well with the old town of Kremnica lying whitely at the bottom of it.

The mountains that ring Kremnica round about are all of volcanic origin and rich in mineral wealth. Here was the old royal mint of Hungary. Most of the workings are now flooded, but two — one yielding gold, one silver — are still in operation. The mint, obedient to a change of masters, turns out the nickel crowns and gold coins of the republic. In the hills to the south, at Banska Stiavnica, are the oldest gold mines in the whole of Europe.

“As plentiful as gold in the crop of a Kremnica goose” is a saying hereabouts.

Later I came to Kremnica and found a lodging at the Inn of the Golden Stag, and spent a long lazy day in the quiet streets.

The ancient wealth of the town is told by the stoutness of the fourteenth century walls and tower gates, by the richness of its two Gothic churches dedicated to St. Elizabeth and to St. Katharine, and by the fine fourteenth and fifteenth century houses that front on the market place, houses that like those of Kutna Hora, have more than a touch of Italian workmanship about their balconies and galleried courtyards. One recalls that Hungarian kings were fond of going to Naples, to Milan and to Ferrara for their wives. More than one d’Este princess had the crown of St. Stephen laid upon her shoulder. And trade with Venice and the kingdom of Sicily was constant and brisk.

It was in Kremnica that I encountered all at one time

and moving in mass formation along the shaded side of the market place fourteen of the itinerant peddlers who are an invariable part of every Slovak market day crowd. With the trays slung from their shoulders and heaped with knives, garters, suspenders, combs, tinsel jewelry and mirrors, and the bundle of walking sticks on their backs, these hawkers appear in every gathering, outside the church doors on Sunday, at weddings and pilgrimages, and cry their wares:

“ Bugle bracelet, necklace amber,
 Perfume for a lady’s chamber, . . .
 Pins and poking sticks of steel,
 What maids lack from head to heel. . . .
 Come buy of me, come; come buy, come buy,
 Buy lads or else your lasses cry. . . .”

After all, Autolycus is the one true note in Shakespeare’s “ desert country of Bomenia.”

But . . . fourteen of them! Could it be a convention?

But all that, as I say, came later. Later too, a visit to the great square castle which rises nobly on the spur of rock close to Zvolen where the Hron comes out of the hills into the plain.

Four square, three storeys high, with towering parapets and rounded corner towers, it stands. Nothing about it anywhere is belligerent or fearsome. It is elegant and leisured . . . a silken-clad, perfumed and ringleted gallant who toys with a sword. It reminds you of those royal pleasure houses of Provence where kings and queens retired from affairs of state, where masques were held and courts of Love, and where the latest tale of Boccaccio was hailed as news.



SUNDAY MORNING — DĚTVÁ



AT THE RADVAN FAIR



IN THE LOW TATRAS



LUPČA CASTLE OVERLOOKS THE VALLEY OF THE HRON

Now, alas, Pusty Hrad (Broad Castle) has fallen on evil days. Mean little hovels crowd its once proud gates that swung wide in 1351 to receive the three kings of Hungary, Bohemia and Poland. The square inner court where once was a garden and fountains is choked with rubbish. Three or four poor families of *tsiganes* have found lodging in the stone vaulted chambers of the second story. The smoke of their peat fires has blackened the blue paint and golden circlets and black crows of King Matus Corfinus whose favorite residence this was.

A dozen heads peered at me over the gallery railing and a dozen pairs of hands pushed forward the poor *cretin* boy who was unanimously elected by the residents of the castle to act as a guide to strangers.

Pusty Hrad was built in the fourteenth century by that Angevin king of Hungary, Louis, called "the Great." Here he entertained Bohemia and Poland with a magnificence that reduced those two monarchs to wondering awe. Here Louis' daughters, Mary and Hedwiga, each to be chosen a queen in her own right, Mary of Hungary, and Hedwiga of Poland, played as children.

Elizabeth, the daughter of Mary "the King" and Sigismund the Emperor — the same Sigismund who betrayed Hus to the Council at Constance — battling to protect her infant son's right to the crown of St. Stephen, gave Pusty Hrad as prize money to her Czech Captain Jan Jiskra z Brandysa. Here in 1437 came Hunyadi Janos to besiege Jiskra. He fired the castle and put its defenders to the sword. Here later came Matus Corvinus, Hunyadi's son, and chosen King of Hungary when a lad of seventeen. The nobles grumbled crying: "Give us a King whose beard we can hold in our fists." He rebuilt the ruin; he summoned architects and crafts-

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men from the south to give it new richness to please his queen, Beatrice of Aragon.

The story of that royal pair forms the theme of Miklos Suranyi's novel in English, "The Woman of Naples."

Here in 1619 came Bethlen Gabor bringing the crown of St. Stephen from Bratislava. With religious war raging and the greedy Hapsburg just over the Danube, Pusty Hrad was a safer treasury.

Waning fortunes of kings, and centuries of neglect have robbed Pusty Hrad of all but its memories. The bats and owls nest in the long halls of the upper story; the *tsiganes* below. I climbed over broken rafters and up the last ladder to the parapets for the view of the noble Tatras on one hand, on the other the wide plain sweeping to the south and to Mt. Pol'any.

Was it from here that Matus and Beatrice watched for the couriers to bring that portrait of il Moro's daughter, Bianca Sforza, "by the brush of Messer Leonardo" that Matus might consider her as a bride for his son?

The origin of these Hunyadis is lost in obscurity. Hunyadi Janos is believed to have been a natural son of the Emperor Sigismund and a peasant girl. The Emperor presented the mother with a ring and promised her that whenever she appeared before him with her child he would bestow upon him riches and honor. She was one day preparing for her journey to the court and had trusted the child with the ring, when a crow, descending, snatched it from his hand and flew with it to a neighboring tree. The child's uncle caught up his long bow, shot the bird and brought the ring back safely. To this incident Janos owed his surname of Corvinus which Matus was to wear with pride. Sigismund presented his son with the estates of Hunyad, whence came his usual ap-

pelation in the Magyar fashion of giving the baptismal name last — Hunyadi Janos. He was Hungary's great captain against the Turks. Then, turn about, with the Turks against Vienna.

The heroic figure of Matus Corvinus dominates the towns along the Hron as the dark and sinister legend of Čak Matus pervades the Povazie.

At Zvolen the Kron appears like a responsible stream. It has spent its adolescent enthusiasms in threading the tortuous valleys of the Nizke Tatry. Before it stretches a long useful career watering the southern Slovakian plain until it arrives in the Danube opposite St. Stephen's town of Gran. The names Hron and Gran are synonymous.

The motor train, a collection of carriages drawn by a gasoline engine, takes you up the Hron valley through forests of chestnut and beech, past Sliac with its white villas and *kupele* on the green slope of the hill, past Garonsek where by thrusting a head out of the carriage window you can see the old high gabled and raftered wooden church, built at the close of the seventeenth century, one of the twenty-two Protestant meeting-houses, "all of wood with no stone or plaster ornament," which King Leopold permitted his Slovak subjects. Of these, four alone remain, and of the four, Garonsek's is the least changed. It stands under its guardian oak like a great Viking ship that has been washed ashore. The separate belfry with its top-heavy, shingled dome still summons the Lutherans of the countryside to prayer.

A feature of this old church is the pew for the Magyar "nobles" of the parish. It is fitted with sliding glass doors that the gentry could draw to shut out any portion

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of the sermon or the Gospel that threatened the security or divine origin of feudalism.

Banska Bystrica takes to itself the title of the most beautiful town in Slovakia — and rightly. Its grouping of proud white towers capped with the distinctive onion domes rises serenely from the green valley where the eager little Bystrica runs foaming to join the statelier Hron.

Like so many Slovak towns, Banska owes its origin to a colony of German miners who settled here in the thirteenth century. King Bela IV, hard pressed to hold his Slovak counties, offered inducements to the Saxon colonists in the way of charters, freedom from conscription and trade rights. The towns they founded prospered, grew rich, developed arts and crafts and a culture unknown to the purely Slovak communities.

The great charm of Banska is its market place — a long, stone-paved quadrangle entered through a deep archway, and leading up to the group of white castle, white church and white clock tower.

The early Saxon burghers built their Town Hall in the center of this *namesti*. When Matus Corvinus came to lodge in the long "king's house," over the present archway, he took one look out of the windows, sent for the burgomaster and ordered the Town Hall removed.

"Why?" cried the citizens.

"Because it spoils the beauty of one of my finest towns," said the king.

And down came the Town Hall, leaving that clear space and the long vista of the end grouping to make all visitors to Banska bless the name of great Hunyadi's greater son.

"That eager and disputatious Calvinist," Bethlen Gabor, also lodged in the "king's house." Here in 1620 he was elected King of Hungary.

The castle is more a town citadel than a royal residence, though one upper corner has been opened to let into its severity a delicate Renaissance loggia. Below, the wall rounds importantly like a burgomaster's paunch, and a chemist has set out two gilded unicorns to call attention to his plasters.

Close by, between the castle and remnants of the old town ramparts, stand the two churches, the German and the Slovak. Each bastion of these was guarded by a different guild, butchers, bakers and clockmakers and showed the arms of the guild on its wall, Banska being truly a merchant's town. On the wall of the former, begun when the town was chartered in 1255, you can trace the development from Romanesque to Gothic, to richer Gothic, to baroque. Begun a century later, the Slovak church, always less affluent, has kept more of its early Gothic character. Both congregations changed their creed in the religious wars, and both were reconverted from Lutheranism to Catholicism with the establishment of the Hapsburg dynasty in Hungary.

In a wide niche on the outer wall of the German church is a wood carving still showing traces of color, and reminiscent of similar groups in Nuremberg and Munich. The scene is the Garden of Gethsemane, the Master is at prayer; around Him lie the sleeping disciples, each, it is said, a portrait of a citizen of Banska. And behind the sleepers, carved in high relief, are the gates and walls and towers — not of Jerusalem, but of Banska Bystrica as it was in the sixteenth century.

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Market day in Banska Bystrica falls on Monday. When I turned the corner into the square on the third morning of my stay I came full on a scene that for color and vivacity, for scent and sound, rivalled the bazaars of Morocco.

Tomatoes were in season; their crimson was heaped against the citadel's white walls. Watermelons were in season; a mound of these, twelve feet high, had two small urchins perched precariously atop to roll down a choice fruit to a customer. Grapes were in season; their musky sweetness rose like incense before the statue of Our Lady in her tall column. Eggs, butter, cheese, mushrooms, fowls, geese, all these were offered, a gamut of insistence, pleading and cajolery. A row of women standing under the clock tower offered hand spun and woven linen for sale. And for a running accompaniment to this voice of trade, there was the pipe and squeak made by the seller of whistles squatting on the curbstone, tootling on a wooden piccolo shaped like a bird and dyed magenta with blue wings. There was the nasal whine of the blind ballad singer with printed ballads for sale — your choice, religious or sentimental, for twenty hel-
lers. There was the rhythmic clump-clump on the stones of the high, black leather boots of men and women. There was the creak of wooden wheels on wooden axles. There was the melancholy winding of the bugle of the town crier, passing from group to group, crying the loss of Alois Svetla's black haired goat and a pair of linen sheets from the washing line of Pani Ruzena Kubelka.

And brooding over all this — those impassionate grey domes lifted on their white towers. There's an importunate urgency about a spire — think how Chartres and high-piled St. Michel prick high heaven with their cry.

Square topped towers are nobly calm and steadfast and just. One is justly French, the other justly English. Slavdom's onion domes are patient and submissive and strangely, terribly fatalistic. They are waiting — waiting. What is it they await? What exotic flowering of the future is enfolded in those smooth grey bulbs?

It is noteworthy that here in Slovakia one is persistently conscious of the future, not the past. Here is a nation which has slept for ten centuries while the rest of Europe exhausted feudalism, Jacobinism, deism, and which has been waked rather forcibly in the last moments of intense nationalism engendered by the World War.

To no other people in Europe, as a whole, did the War bring such a change of status — political, economic and social. Already Slovakia is as different from the Slovakia of 1914 as it is from the Slovakia of Čak Matus. And this is due in very small measure to the Slovaks themselves. Czech thought, Czech zeal for progress, Czech determination to play a part among the nations, are prodding her into awareness.

What is Slovakia's expression? No one knows; scarce anyone will prophesy. Those pregnant domes hold their secret still.

I went marketing with Mrs. R—— and bought eggs by the pair and milk by the litre and cheeses — tiny, clammy white rolls of sheep's curd shaped like dolls — by the seven. "Seven-children-for-a-kreutzer" is their name.

In every crowd in this section between the Danube and the Tatras the most picturesque figures are the Dětvals.

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The village of Dětva lies fifteen miles south of Banská. Two rows of whitewashed houses along a country road that widens to make room for the church on its green, the *hostinec* across the duck pond and two general stores comprise it. This is the family center of the clan, three thousand of whom live in the village, another seven thousand on isolated farms and small sheep ranches round about.

Who are the Dětvals? No one can tell exactly, only that they are distinct from the rest of the Slovaks. The men are taller, darker, bolder, more alert. They have a reputation too for cruelty and of being thieves. Not for nothing do they wear their jackets, even in coldest weather, hung like capes, with the sleeves hanging down free, and the ends of the sleeves sewn up to form long pouches. The four braids worn by the old men may tell of a Tartar origin. The strange carvings on the crosses in their cemetery and the carved wooden cups which their shepherds make for their own use are unlike those found elsewhere in Slovakia.

On Sundays and market days the tribe gathers. You see them coming along the white, dusty roads and by unmarked paths over the wheatfields — the men in loose, wide trousers of white linen fringed to hang over their high, black leather boots. Above these are sleeveless vests of sheepskin worn with the fleece inside — and an amazing disregard for the thermometer — waist length, military jackets of black homespun bound with scarlet at neck and belt, and long aprons of black sateen embroidered with bands of intricate, many-colored floral designs. These aprons are worn by the young bloods. After a man settles down to middle age — like the women of Čičmany — he lays aside his greatest glory.

The women are equally resplendent in long, full skirts of dark purple and green sateen, tight bodices of fine silver brocade, sewn with beads and silver, wide, starched fichu of white embroidered linen and lace crossed over the breast to tie at the back and with floating ends, and the full-blown glory of sleeves of coarse linen spreading like great balloons and stiff with embroidery in yellow, orange, red and blue.

Before Mass begins, the square blossoms and glows like a garden. The week's business is done, the price of eggs, cheese—made of ewes' milk—wool and leather is settled. The two stores do a rushing business; embroidered aprons, lace for caps, extra pairs of sleeves, a meter or two of homespun linen are traded for sterner necessities of flour, salt, calico and boots.

When the cracked bell rings imperatively there is an obedient movement toward the church door. The men stalk proudly to the belfry, whence they mount stairs to places in the gallery of the church. The women edge each other, their hands held out to guard uncrushed the glory of their embroidered sleeves.

This embroidery for which the women of Dětva have long been famous even in a land where the art of embroidery is looked on as natural activity for womankind is now putting Dětva on the map of modern business. And, not incidentally, bringing much needed employment and money to the peasants of the district.

There is another modest looking building on the one street, the School of Handwork. There, all through the winter months while the snow lies heavy on the fields and many of the men go up into the Tatras to work in the lumber camps, a hundred or more women will be at work. Blouses and children's clothes and table linens

will be embroidered with the lovely, old designs that are a part of the Slavic heritage. And the good crowns that are the price of these will help very materially to keep the black bread and sausage on the supper tables during the lean months.

The embroidery industry of Dětva began some thirty-five years ago as a pet charity of the Archduchess Isabella. The Dětvals have always been loyal subjects of the Hungarian crown. Their tightly fitted black jackets are still cut from the pattern of those they wore when they formed the famous Black Guard of King Matus Corvinus. To further this pet charity, the Archduchess — the same lady who sent the Countess Sophie Čotek packing, and Franz Josef's heir back to Vienna in disgrace — wore on many occasions an adaptation of the Dětva dress. The Princess was beloved and beautiful; the style was becoming; the "Isabella blouse" became the vogue in Vienna and Budapest — even in Paris. Children, not only those whose names stood in the *Almanach de Gotha* but the sons and daughters of rich commoners, wore with conscious pride the linen blouses embroidered in orange and red and yellow that have been the costume of all the children of Dětva for hundreds of years.

Then came the War. The men of Dětva went out to fight for Hungary as they had done time and again for a thousand years. The women tilled the fields and in winter took the places of their men in the logging camps. The workshop was deserted. With the peace, the village found itself no longer Hungarian but a part of the new Republic of Czechoslovakia.

Ten years ago a group of Czech business men, realizing the industrial value of the Archduchess's "charity,"

bought the village workshop and reopened it. The women came back and took up their needles gratefully. Now the "Dětva" company operates fifty similar workshops in as many other villages of Slovakia, in which more than two thousand women find employment. This has now become the largest handwork industry in Europe.

I came back to Banská Bystrica for a second visit after the middle of September at the time when the Hron Valley was making ready for its great annual fair at Radvan, a suburb of Banská.

The R——s had gone vacationing in Dalmatia. Another regiment was stationed in Banská, with a new corps of officers and wives in residence on the *Narodni Dom's* second floor and a new set of orderlies but they had the same lost, forlorn look, and the same disorderly uniforms, as they polished boots and spurs on the steps of the staircase.

But the orchestra leader of the *Narodni Dom's* coffee house knew me. His eyes — little, very bright eyes behind glasses — gleamed. He tucked the crook of his big cello into the curve of his shoulder, he clasped one arm about its big burnished body, he drew his bow with ecstasy.

He left the platform and, holding the throbbing body of his inamorata pressed close to him, he stepped featly in and out between the crowded tables, leading the sluggish *cymbalon* and the frailer violin into the yearning melody of *Tečie Voda, Tečie*.

How that song pursues you through Slovakia!

"Flow, water, flow!" sobs the cello. And the violin and *cymbalon* taking their cue from the impassioned

movements of the cellist's body, and perhaps from the divine instincts of Romany, echo with haunting insistence, "Flow not, flow not, water!"

The cellist gives me a meaning glance, then turns his look upon the white plate set on a table by the door on which the more musically-enured, perhaps less easily impressionable patrons of the coffee house have contributed twenty cents in copper pieces for the evening's music.

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It was during that second stay in Banska that I went, by the convenient motor train, up the narrowing valley of the Hron into the Nizke Tatry.

This southern and lower group of the Carpathians forms a bulwark fifty miles long across Eastern Slovakia with the Alpine mass of Dumbier rising six thousand feet out of its center. Dumbier's three peaks tower over the deep forested ridges and narrow, rock-walled valleys that are without villages or roads. Even the vigorous Tourist Club has not penetrated all of these. The Vysoke Tatry, to the north, have been conquered as the Swiss Alps have been. Their slopes are ringed with hotels and resorts. But the Nizke Tatry remain a land of legend and romantic possibilities.

From a limestone ledge under Dumbier, grey Lupča Castle surveys the Hron. It was a Thurzo stronghold and declared for Bethlen Gabor. Beyond, Brusno, a tiny spa in the forests, called up memories of Bojnecke Kupele; then we came to the terminal station of Cervena Skala (Red Rock).

This is no more than a roseate cliff rising from the rolling green uplands of the Zupa of Gemer on the edge



THE ANCIENT WOODEN BELFRY IN GARONSEK

of the Slovakian karst that bounds the Nizke Tatry on the east and south.

It is a limestone country of huge rugged crags and deep chasms through which streams flow to lose themselves suddenly in subterranean channels and come to the light again miles away. The karst abounds in caves, many of these as yet unexplored and continuations of the famous Aggtelek Caverns which lie just over the border in Hungary.

The mail auto carried me and six other passengers, including a young calf in a crate which the driver lashed to one side of the car's hood, ballasting the other side with two sacks of potatoes, over miles of up and down, lonely roads to Dobsina. Once, at a distance, a tall conical hill rose above a sweep of spruce forest. A castle crowned it—Muran. It was a redoubtable Hussite stronghold of the fifteenth century. Now, the calf's owner informed me, it was the private property of the King of Bulgaria.

Then the road descended steeply, hill and castle dropped out of sight, we turned back into the karst where in high fields women in flowered kirtles were busy at the third haying where the newly shorn green was thick starred with lavender crocuses of autumn, as plentiful as dandelions in an American April.

The Dobsina ice cave is one of Slovakia's natural wonders. The tiny wooden door which opens into the side of the forested mountain leads into a startling and ageless world. Down a few steps in the dark womb of the mountain you come upon a great chamber one hundred and fifty feet long and more than thirty feet high. It is all of ice. Under the electric light floor, sides and roof glitter with a white radiance. Icicles, like stalactites,

centuries a-making, fret the ceiling. A waterfall, centuries dead, leaps from the edge of the floor into an unplumbed black abyss. Paths have been marked off and steps cut into the ice to lead to other chambers; to a "chapel" carved into the ice with walls four feet thick. The temperature changes scarcely at all from season to season. At no time does it mount above thirty-four degrees Fahrenheit.

The guide, a gnome-like little creature in earth-stained corduroys, explains that the ice has been formed here by the accumulation of cold air in the caves and subterranean passages which, owing to the high altitude of the mouth of the cave, cannot be exchanged for warmer air.

But the scientific explanation falls far short. One has entered the realm of relativity, beyond sun and seasons. Time ends at the little wooden door.

You shiver, not from the cold, but at man's temerity in entering this secret place of the Most High. You hurry up the steps to the door.

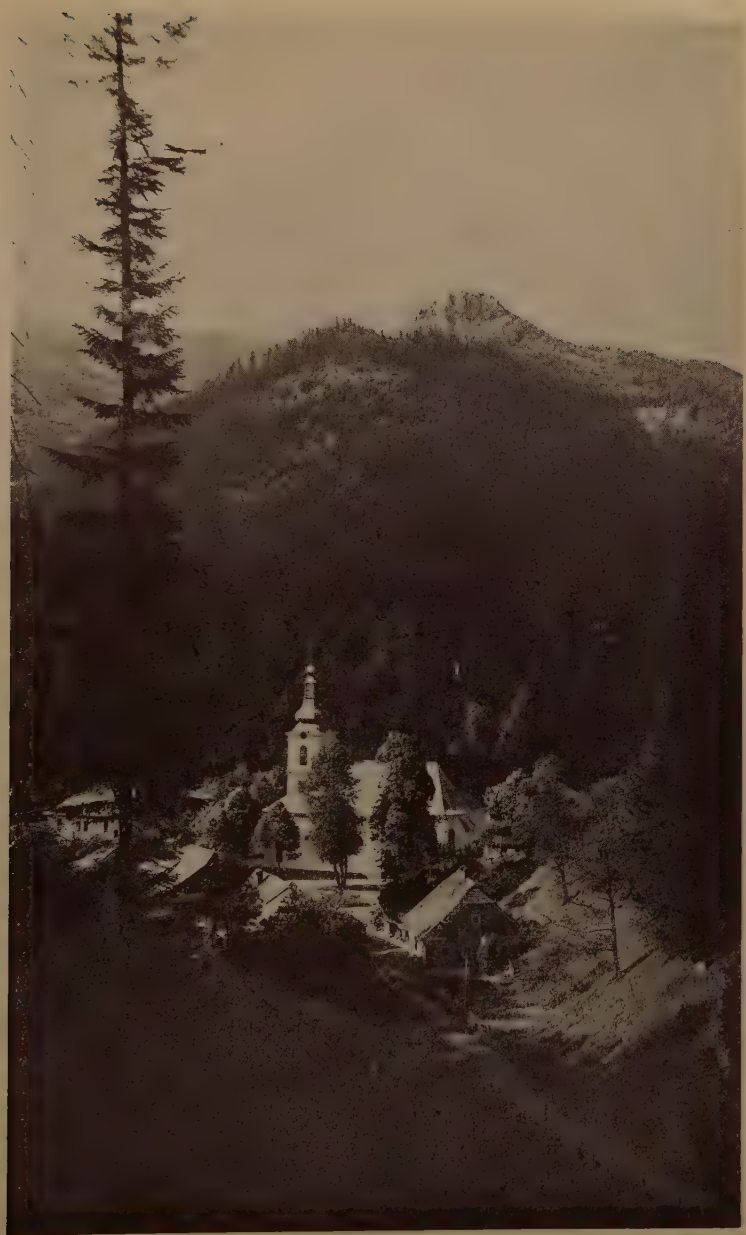
"Don't you like it?" the gnome asks anxiously.

Like it? Does one *like* Milton or Niagara Falls or Michelangelo's "Last Judgment?"

But he is a very matter-of-fact little gnome and he shakes his head sadly. You hear his remark to the two German tourists in woolly brown capes with peaked hoods who take down statistics in capable notebooks:

"*Aber, eine Amerikanerin, und unbezweifelt verrückt.*"¹

¹ "An American lady; and undoubtedly mad."



STARÉ HORY



THE PILGRIMAGE ON ITS WAY



BEFORE THE CHURCH DOOR

CHAPTER SEVEN

STARÉ HORY



ODAY I have gone on pilgrimage to Staré Hory. Not afoot, as have gone some thousand others in a straggling chanting stream of scarlet head-kerchiefs and fluttering, embroidered aprons and white linen bundles, bound on stooped backs, marching to the measures of endless shrill litanies, and the stolid clumping of heavy Slovak boots — but in a rattling motor bus, up the steeps of the Fatras, which are foothills of the Nižke Tatry which are one vertebra of the great Carpathian backbone of Central Europe.

Where the hills come together in a deep crease, where spruce forest presses close on spruce forest and the white road cleaving them runs down three ways — westward to Turčiansky Svätý Martin, north to Ružomberok and south through Banská Bystrica and the rich fields of the Dětvan to the Danube — there, on a plateau a quarter of a mile across is the white plaster church and the dozen plastered log houses of Staré Hory.

Staré Hory — Old Hill — goal of pilgrimages for centuries. Why? No Slovak can tell you. They had forgotten the reason perhaps before Cyril and Methodius sailed up the Danube from Byzantium with the Gospel and an alphabet. What altars stood there no one knows. But of their stones was made the twelfth-century church with its fortifying wall; and a later Magyar hierarchy inscribed the legend *Ave Maria* in gilt above the door.

Twice in the year the call of Staré Hory goes forth; once in May and now on the eighth of September, the day set down in the Slovak calendars as the birthday of the Virgin Mary.

The September trek is always the more popular. The harvest is over; the crops — all but a last thin haying that may be snatched from autumn's clutches — are gathered. Now one has time to attend to matters of the soul; to set all straight before the year's death.

Through generations, for patent reasons of sound business, this season of pilgrimage has been chosen for the annual four days fair at Radvan. Each *Zupa* in Slovakia has its big yearly market in addition to the lesser monthly and weekly ones. Of all these, the Radvan fair has more nearly kept its primitive characteristics.

Radvan lies on the bank of the Hron, a mile below Banská Bystrica. At all other times, it is an indifferent, lazy village. But now it blossoms with hectic life.

A hundred stalls are being set up along the unpaved street; here are gathering all the itinerant sellers of calico, wool blankets, hats, American clothes, tinware, pottery, furniture, goose feathers, laces and painted ribbons, who travel the roads of Slovakia. Their great canvas covered wagons and their horses are turned into a field below the village. Radvan is the last big market of

the season. The peasants must do their trading now against the winter.

All down the line of stalls sounds a note of preparation. Hammers and saws are busy; old acquaintances are renewed; old grudges revived. A journeyman painter is hard at work making signs to go over the booths. He has a nice taste in ornamentation and flowers and flourishes and grotesque animals bloom from his capitals so that his work is much in demand. Peep-shows are being set up; there is a fat woman from Filakovo; and a Wild West Show with a feathered Indian brave who has never been west of the Valix. There is a carrousel. Its primitive mechanism is turned by a brawny youth, bare to the waist, who adds an improvisation of "*Hoja, hoja,*" to the creak of the crank.

This afternoon and for three days thereafter Radvan will teem with life. But today, there is other business afoot.

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All day along the roads that lead to Staré Hory the September wind has torn at blue and scarlet banners, flanking the crucifixes wreathed in spruce boughs and paper roses which head each delegation. Behind march the pilgrims — Dětvans in their wide, white linen trousers and short black coats bound in scarlet; men from the towns in purple and green "American" clothes and plush hats, wearing medallions of the Virgin on their lapels; high-booted lumbermen from the forests along the Vah; heavy-booted, black-kerchiefed widows who have made the pilgrimage a score of times; proud young matrons from the Revuca district in red and blue embroidered caps with floating streamers and snug white

linen jackets, hiding the glory of their best red and blue embroidered bodices; women from Dětva in short puffed sleeves stiff with red and orange embroidery.

Women are in a majority — not for excess of feminine devotion, but because this is the September trek. In May, when the day of the second pilgrimage comes round, the men will outnumber the women. Why? They shrug their shoulders. So it has always been since the beginning.

Some of them have already been three days on the road. Last night a sudden wild storm swept out of the Tatras across the land, heralding autumn. For an hour it raged in a mood of high wind and torrential rain. Then it went shuddering, back into the mountains.

When I threw wide my window in Banska Bystrica, I could hear it still, but far away, sobbing itself to rest. And then along the dark, rain-washed street below me passed a little company of twinkling lights, like reassuring stars, out of the dark and the scent of rain came the chant of voices addressed to Panny Marie. The pilgrims were on their way.

Who knows under the lee of what bank they had hidden from the tempest's fury. Then they had set their candles alight again and turned once more to the road.

Now, the goal reached, their voices are hoarse with the continual chanting of the litanies. Many have taken off their high leather boots and trudge gratefully barefoot over the stones.

So they come, in mighty stream, up the steps in the church wall, and in at the door where the ragged beggars crouch on the step to whine coins from apron pockets. A dozen penitents, whose sins are urgent, begin to make their penance, crawling around the church on their

knees. The church will not hold them all. Five hundred kneel in the yard before the door. The priest is waiting at the altar steps. The Mass begins.

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Westward from Staré Hory the road runs down through a secret green valley to Turčiansky Svätý Martin.

Viewed from the train, this ancient cultural capital of Slovakia is a mass of blatant new buildings, evidence of the determined effort "to put Svätý Martin on the map," as a rival of Bratislava for the administrative offices of Slovakia. Behind them, at the heart of the town, is the dusty, sun-baked, wind-swept square with its thirteenth century church, the headquarters of Matica Slovenska, and the museum where one may study wax effigies of the very folk we have passed on the road, and relics of the rich ancient culture of the Slovak peasantry. That the culture is ancient is due to the heavy heel of Hungary. Seton Watson gives the number of intelligentsia among Slovaks prior to the War as between seven hundred and fifty and one thousand — a body recruited in the main from the children of the Protestant clergy.

In the library at Svätý Martin, where half a dozen young students were at work, Štěpan Křčmery, secretary of Matica, and himself a poet of worth, took down for me a case of manuscript — thirty thousand Slovak folk songs with the musical scores of half that number, a collection soon to be published.

Does one catch a derisive gesture toward Moravia and Bohemia who have appropriated to themselves the title of "historic lands"?

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From Staré Hory the road runs north over the Pass below Ostredok, the highest peak in the Niske Tatry, to Ružomberok. Ružomberok is the parish of Father Andrej Hlinka. Five years before the War, when Seton Watson published his *Study of Race Relations*, in Hungary, he did not scruple to give the priest of Ružomberok chief place as the most important figure in Slovak affairs at the time. "He stood among other things for that devotion to religion as they conceived it; for that outraged moral sense which have characterized the Slovaks in modern times."¹

If there was one Slovak whom old Hungary regarded with an excess of hatred and suspicion that man was the parish priest of Ružomberok. For his fiery, outspoken championship of the cause of a free Slovakia, Hlinka spent four years in the Hungarian prison at Szeged.

Since then many waters have flowed down the Danube. Hlinka has been blundered against and blundered. His unexpected appearance before the Versailles Conference, where he pleaded autonomy for his people, — was more picturesque than statesmanlike.

He came under a Polish passport since he could not obtain one at home.

Since the establishment of the Republic, Prague has steadfastly refused to consider him in counsels on Slovak affairs — a tactless, if not grievous, error. Rome has cold-shouldered him, and atoned for the coldness by the gift, not of a bishopric, but of a Papal pronotaryship — a safe honor which can have no political consequences. And Hlinka, man of the people, with no education beyond that of the church schools of Slovakia, priest and churchman first, no statesman, ardent, fanatic, sensi-

¹ Seton Watson, "*The New Slovakia*."

tive, has withdrawn to his citadel at Ružomberok and summoned about him the forces of his Catholic Slovak People's Party.

The forces are not any too strong — the statement that the intelligentsia of Slovakia is drawn chiefly from the children of Protestant clergy is Hlinka's own; they are woefully lacking in leaders. Their potential power is drawn from two sources — Hlinka's own impassioned vitality and the money which Slovaks in America contribute to the political cause.

With one thing Hlinka and Matica Slovenska are in full accord — both agree that the day of the peasant is over. (Tan shoes, and American suits, and plush hats along the road to Staré Hory.)

Matica, admitting this, enlarges its museum shelves, adds "*Obs.*" to certain cards in its indexes, publishes a brochure. Hlinka tightens the crimson sash about his cassock, strides down the hill to the town and buys a textile factory and a paper mill abandoned by the Hungarian Jews. He builds a hotel in Ružomberok — "all with money from America." He forms a People's Bank, with himself as president, and opens branches in many towns in Slovakia. He publishes a newspaper in Bratislava. He, himself, sets the hour when I, an American who is interested in Slovakia, shall come to see him — eight o'clock in the morning.

I am there in his shabby office before he comes from saying his Mass in the untidy, baroque church, where a hundred or more peasant folk are gathered. Outside the door two barefoot young girls are mangling the house linen. A bent old woman in a shawl brings the Father's breakfast — a cup of weak coffee and a chunk of hard rye bread.

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He waves her and the food away. His thin, fine hands play with the gold filigree cross above his crimson girdle. His face is alight, eager, impassioned; his voice a torrent of German — a concession to a foreigner who cannot be expected to understand Slovak. And his talk is all of Slovakia — Catholic Slovakia — which he sees rescued from the Magyars only to be trampled under the foot of the Czechs.

As we sit there, in Bratislava the trial of Senator Tuka, who is the representative of Hlinka party, and after Hlinka himself, its spokesman, is drawing to its climax. It is a foregone conclusion that the charges against the Senator as an *agent provocateur* of Hungarian interests in Slovakia will be proved. The Hlinka party is in disgrace.

But the man who begot it knows no abatement of his fervor.

He begins to speak of it at once: "Tuka — it is I. It is I they are attacking — the Hlinka party they are trying to discredit." His hands flutter over the paper-strewn table — back to the cross — on his breast.

He sees himself as a man besieged; so he fights, desperately, there in his citadel, attacked from the west by Czech liberalism and free thought as well as Czech industry, and from the east by Russian Communism.

He brings out for me to see the Bible which he has translated into Slovak. Slovak Protestants have no Bible in their own tongue; they use either the German or the Czech translation. It is work which he did while he was in America visiting Slovak congregations, and urging the cause of Slovakia upon them. "*Ich habe gebetet und gearbeitet*," he says, and his face and voice are suddenly wistful and infinitely weary — "*prayed and worked*." . . .

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Southward from Staré Hory the road winds down to the Danube. Across the fast-flowing water lies Hungary, the furthest outpost of Asia in Europe; Hungary, proud, bitter, revengeful, with nothing to lose, and who can tell what to gain by making herself as great a nuisance as possible in Central European affairs. Magyar hating Czech, and Slovakia like a bone between them.

A group of diplomats gather about a table in Versailles and draw lines on a map — boundaries are born. The stroke of their pens leaves a professor of geology on one side of the line and his career, begun in the university at Budapest, on the other. It divides a family in two. Again and again in villages in southern Slovakia I was told: "We are Magyars. We would rather live in Hungary. But here we have a business, here is our house, here we must stay. . . ."

It is on these *Magyarones*, long settled in Slovakia, that Prague looks with suspicion. It is among them that Hungarian agents seek to sow the seeds of disaffection. Will a Hapsburg king rule again in Hungary? The Little Entente is unalterably opposed to such a political move.

Meanwhile, Czech schools are doing wonders in Slovak villages. Masaryk has become, even to the peasant mind, a figure of heroic proportions, the Republic has endured for ten years . . . but . . . but . . .

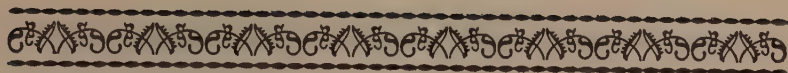
Meanwhile, on Staré Hory, the last bell has rung. *Missa est*. There is a silence. Then the door gives back the pilgrims to the road. Prayer books are put back into pockets or coat sleeves, and apples, grapes, chunks of bread are taken out. They stream happily down

the steps, stopping at the stalls to buy painted gingerbread, adorned with pictures of the Virgin and of Masaryk, rosaries of pink and yellow sugar plums, knives and suspenders and china images of the saints — Florian, as a protection against fire — and George, who endows husbandmen with strength and barren women with fruitfulness — Cyril and Methodius, who are their very own. A bold-eyed young Dětvan pulls a girl's braid and then buys her a blue glass mug to make amends. The bundles are bound on backs again; the processional cross is taken from its long handle, wrapped in linen and slung across a lad's shoulder. To Radvan, now! To Radvan! An accordion breathes its preliminary gusty sigh and a hundred voices take up the song:

“Under Muran's castle wall,
Where the Danube flows so free,
Fought poor Jan and a rich old Jew.
All for love of fair Annie.
All for love of Anička.

You have a kerchief, I have one,
Drop them in the Danube; see,
He whose kerchief floats more swift,
He shall wed with fair Annie.
He shall wed Anička.

Annie, Annie, the Jew is first.
Anička, woe is me!
“Prut! am I with a Jew to pair?
Not had he lands and gold to share,
Not were he lord of the castle there —
I'm Janko's own Anička.”



CHAPTER EIGHT

BY THE EYES OF THE SEA



COMING by the motor road from Staré Hory over the pass below Ostredok in the Mala Fatras, my first view of Ružomberok had shown the town lying in the angle formed by the marriage of the Revuca and the Vah. On a limestone cliff jutting from the green mountain slope rose a ruin — Likava Castle.

Castles on Slovakia's hillsides are nearly as plentiful as the autumn crocuses in her meadows, and as difficult to gather. Perhaps it is because most of these were the strongholds of Magyar nobles and today anything Magyar is definitely *non grata* north of the Danube. Even the useful little Guide Book which Čedok publishes in all languages, including English, dismisses a provokingly picturesque ruin as "Castle. XIV Century," to wax enthusiastic in many paragraphs over caves of the stone age and Pleistocene remains.

Being American and female, castles have an allure for me. After all, these were once the homes of living men and women who printed their strong personalities on the

countryside. Beauty and ugliness, generosity and selfishness, hope, fear, success, failure, dreams and ambitions have crowded their walls. Where life has been lived so fully can life be said to end?

Little Ružomberok seemed bent on rivalling great Prague as far as building operations went. Streets were torn up, old houses were coming down, new ones rising. Sturdy young women in scarlet headkerchiefs trundled barrows of stones and shouldered hods of mortar and bricks up inclined planks to the builders on scaffoldings. All this bustle of construction centred around the *Kulturný Dom*, the combination hotel-community, house-political, headquarters-movie palace which the Slovak People's Party has built "all with money from America." All night a great deal of talking went on in the community rooms; a phonograph whined; the *kino* was showing a Greta Garbo picture. But the hotel was the usual Czech and Slovak kind with more emphasis on the coffee house than on the restaurant; and one could not help wishing that the "kultur" had spread to sweeping the stairs a little more frequently.

Only on the steep hill which rises out of the center of the little town and is climbed by a long flight of covered steps to the rather battered sixteenth century church of Sv. Ondrej — Father Hlinka's church — was the past inviolate. The hilltop was crowded with ecclesiastical buildings. Behind the church's apse, between it and remnants of old ramparts, stood a crescent of once fine sixteenth century houses with curving fronts and vistas through their doors of courts overhung with galleries. One, once the vicarage, was adorned with two delicate pilasters reaching to the roof and an oval window in a lovely foliated stone tracery set like a jewel between

them. Above the door ran an inscription in badly rhymed Latin, commending roof and hearth to "Chaste Minerva."

No wonder Svaty Ondrej turned his back.

I walked out to Likava on an afternoon of mists and more than a hint of rain. The road wound out of the town and over the bridge near the massive boulder which serves the neighborhood as a weather prophet. On seasons when the waters fall below a certain mark on its side, famine is sure to follow.

Apparently the flood was still safely high, for from the farmsteads along the road that day came the rhythmic beat of harvest flails. An open barn door showed two women — Ruth and Naomi. One swung the heavy flail with measured insistence, the other turned and spread the grain on the stone floor with a long-handled wooden shovel. One sees these primitive harvest implements for sale in every market. They are still used by nearly all Slovak farmers.

The hills stand round about Ružomberok like stalwart guardians. Their lower slopes are a sweep of harvest fields. Then the dark forests begin. To the northwest the spruces and pines march higher and higher to the Beskyds that form the natural southern frontier of Poland. The Orava flows swiftly through them opening the route that John Sobieski followed when he hastened from Cracow to the relief of Vienna in 1683. Orava has its own proud castle and between it and Likava rises the dark forested bulk of Velky Choc, nearly five thousand feet high.

Under Likava's grey wall a little mountain brook purled over its stones behind a squalid village.

I crawled through a break in a hedge and struck off across a field by a footpath toward the castle on the rise beyond the brook. The mists had blown down from the mountain; they wrapped the ruin in shuddering trails; they curled in and out of the gaping windows. Likava's grey ghost glimmered through the young fir trees which have marched up the cliff and now press hungrily about its walls. The forest has conquered where other besiegers failed. Tall spruces crowd the court in the room of Stefan Illyhazy and his stalwart sons.

[There was a castle on this site since the thirteenth century. The present ruin with its long south wall spaced with windows and two deep oriels with remnants of elegant stone mouldings, dates from the seventeenth century, the time of Likava's greatness. It was then the seat of the Illyhazys, one of those powerful Hungarian families who divided the suzerainty of northern Slovakia. Illyhazy, Rakočzy, Zrinyi, Thurzo, Thököly, Zapolsky — these names one meets again and again in the land of the Tatras. Their ruined strongholds overlook the passes into Poland. Their tombs with black and white marble effigies of stout, broad-bearded knights, their painted hatchments and long eulogies in Latin stand choked with dust in the parish churches of the villages where once they rode in proud consciousness of power. These are all that remain of the wild, dark tide that swept up over the hill country, possessed it for ten centuries, then ebbed. They were to old Hungary what the Sforzas were to Milan, the Medicis to Florence, the d'Estes to Ferrara.

In 1609 Stefan Illyhazy of Likava was Palatine. He was an ardent Calvinist, the pupil of Luther and Melancthon. A grandson, Gaspar, married Helena Thurzo,

a daughter of Palatine Juraj Thurzo of Orava, and brought her to Likava as a bride. Here in 1670 their son Gabriel sheltered thirteen-year-old Emerich Thököly, the grandson of another Thurzo daughter, and of Stefan Thököly of Kežmarok. Emerich Thököly's father had joined Rackozy and Frangipani in their revolt against King Leopold. He was defending Orava against the king's forces when he was killed. Word came over the mountain to Likava and young Emerich, on whose head the king had set a price, fled, dressed as a girl, into Poland. He was to come back four years later at the head of twenty thousand men to make himself lord of all northern Slovakia and to be hailed as King of Hungary by the Porte.

The hero drama of Emerich Thököly's life reads like a Dumas romance. He was the last in the list of those great war captains of the Reformation, which began with Žiška and included Cromwell, Mansfield, Waldstein, Gustavus Adolphus, the Condes, Henry of Navarre and William of Orange. He was the last but one of the Magyar nobles who resisted to the death the growing dominance of Austria. His stepson, Francis Rakočzy, was to be the last of these.

In 1683, Thököly led the Turks in their siege of Vienna. Only the military genius of John Sobieski defeated him. The Sultan, informed by Thököly's enemies that his general had tricked him, had the Magyar leader brought in chains to Constantinople. Later he was exonerated and the Sultan made amends with the gift of estates on the Golden Horn. There Thököly's wife, the brave Helena Zrinyi, joined him. She had been fighting on her own behalf in her castle at Mukačevo in Ruthenia, had been conquered after two years by the tyrant

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Caraffa, had been sent to Bratislava and shut up in a convent there, and only escaped to join her husband in time for the happy ending required by Romance. Emerich Thököly may well have furnished Dumas with the inspiration for *Monte Cristo*.

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But the star of all Slovakia's castles is Orava. Karluv Tyn in Bohemia; Pernstejn in Moravia; Orava in Slovakia. Yes, even before black Trenčín; before elegant Žvolen; before white and gleaming Spisska Podhradie; before that one with the lovely, lingering name of which the Magyars sing — Kražnahorka — the one I did not see.

The daily motor bus from Ružomberok to Dolní Kubín took me over the mountain road, past Likava. The regiment had gone on. The village dozed and threshed its rye; the geese waddled safely down the hill to the castle brook. Then we turned into the forests. Velký Choc loomed above us. In a clearing a forester stood and leaned on his rifle and watched us pass. He wore his black felt hat cocked in Napoleonic fashion.

The Slovak black felt hat is capable of as many moods as a gypsy's violin. With brim rolled back all round it is disarmingly simple; cocked at one side, it becomes jaunty, devil-may-care; drawn low over one eye it carries a suggestion of hauteur. This pliable black felt is the inevitable headgear of all but the Dětviňani who wear either the high-crowned felt hat of the Hungarian sheepherders, or very flat, almost crownless hats, banded with silver and red worsted, which are their very own.

The forester and one very old woman trudging along the mountain road with a black kerchief knotted over



RUŽOMBEROK LIES AT THE BASE OF THE HILLS



ONE OF THE FOREST VILLAGES NEAR RUŽOMBEROK



THE FORESTER NEAR ORAVA

her wide standing white lace cap and a large cotton umbrella clutched in her hand, were all the folk we met along the forest road until close on noon we dropped down the last hill into Dolni Kubin.

The village lies on the Orava and on the little railroad which winds up the narrow river valley under Orava Castle to the Polish frontier thirty miles to the north. Old Austria built the road to lead into Galicia. It was an important line of communication when the Russians attacked that front in 1915.

Dolni Kubin was the home of Janko Matuska, the composer of the Slovak national anthem "*Nad Tatrou sa blýska*" (Over the Tatras comes light).

I walked about waiting for the train to carry me to Orava and wondered in which of the tiny cottages set shoulder to shoulder, turning dark, timbered gables to the street, lived the wife of Petr Ružicka and their two sons. There are those, I suppose, who will think that I should have sought her out, should have given her word of the ferryman at Skalka. But who am I to meddle with Fate and Svaty Benedict?

Orava castle bursts on you like a fanfare of trumpets.

It rises dramatically on its great rock nearly four hundred feet above the swift river. A true mountain stream is the Orava, foaming white in the rapids, amber brown and crystal clear in the sudden deep pools where the trout swim lazily. Here the river swings about a curve, the valley has widened, the forests draw back respectful of the Thurzo stronghold. Between them and it —

"On either side the river, lie

Long fields of barley and of rye . . .

And through the fields the road runs by. . . ."

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O Elaine! O Guinevere! O Launcelot! O frail and nameless Lady of Shallott! Orava is yours by all the rights of poesy.

The castle climbs the cliff in seven distinct units, the work of five centuries. The long hall on the summit is the oldest portion and is said to date from the twelfth century, soon after the coming of the Magyars to Slovakia. One century's building reaches down to the next in a series of covered stairways and long wooden galleries that link courts and halls whose deep windows look down the rock wall on the rafts going downward with the flood, on the river meadows with the

“ . . . reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,”

and on the scarlet kerchiefs of the peasant girls that glow like poppies among the ripened grain.

A long iron bridge spans the river from the railway to the castle side. The road leads round the rock to the little white village that hides behind the promontory. A rude signboard nailed to an ash tree points: NA ZAMOK (To the Castle). Surely this is Arden!

There is a satisfying ferocity about the knocker on Orava's outermost gate — a grinning iron dragon with lifted claws. The first long courtyard leads steeply between the rising rock and a wall with a wooden gallery on which appear traces of frescoes of some many-domed citadel like the Kremlin. Then a gate with a portcullis; a second court, and after that a long dark tunnel cut into the rock hill and curving around it to come out into a higher court on the river side. There stands the chapel with the Thurzo arms and the date 1543, the year when

Franco Thurzo became Lord of Orava; a long terrace with carved balustrades and a hint of gardens.

Likava is a grey ghost of past loveliness. Orava today is quite livable. In 1809, the then owner, Count Francis Zichy, restored it fully after a disastrous fire. One recalls that a bearer of this name holds a portfolio in the present Austrian government. The present owner of Orava is Count Esterhazy.

In the first two centuries of its career, Orava belonged to whoever could take it. Zapolsky, Zrinyi, Ctibor, Jan z Dubcova, all have been lords of Arva in their time. Jiskra besieged it in 1429. But its great days came with the Thurzos and the Palatine Juraj. His tomb is in the chapel. The effigy shows him in puffed doublet and long hose, a vigorous, commanding figure with a broad bushy beard that recalls the portraits of the Emperor Charles V. The strong dark face in the portrait in the long gallery is unforgettable, a face saved from cruelty by its intelligence. The most touching of all Orava's relics are the letters exchanged between Juraj Thurzo and his young wife, left as chatelaine of Orava while he was away in the Turkish wars.

The Thurzos were leaders in the Protestant reformation in Hungary. Here at Orava they entertained Charles Augustus of Sweden and he and George Rakoczy II planned their Polish campaign.

Juraj, the Palatine, left seven daughters. Their names ring like a carillon down the years: Anna, Maria, Katharine, Barbara, Helena, Judith, Susanna. Each married into a great house of Hungary or Austria and Orava has been the property of the descendants of one or the other since 1626.

One other daughter is said to have been drowned in the

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castle well and her body never recovered. So one little lost Thurzo daughter remains to Orava a very gentle ghost.

Not all the signboards at Orava are in Slovak. On the wall of the custodian's office I noticed a fine photograph of the castle and this legend: "May be bought with the sheltering box at the castellan."

That was a night of full moon. I sat late on the upper balcony of Orava Podzamok's tiny inn while the men and boys of the village played bowls in the alley on the hill slope by the light of the moon.

Bowls is not a game conducive to meditation. In this instance, there was, in addition to the crash of the balls, the shrill "*Hojas!*" when a shot went home, the stamp of approving feet and the long-drawn breathy signs of an introspective concertina. But none of these entered into my mood. Bathed in silver light, the castle rose above the dark tree tops like a bit of Merlin's enchantment.

Question: What is the exact combination of moonlight and castle and forested heights required to turn an American *spisovatelka* into a poet?

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At first view, the Vysoke Tatry seems far too spectacular to be real. Some all powerful director has ordered this "set" for the background of a stupendous drama of soaring ambition, pride and the loneliness that is born of these. The mountain mass, not over twenty-two miles in extent, rises sheer from the green valley of the upper Vah to a height of more than eight thousand feet. The "twelve mountain children" lift their sterile grey

peaks high, high above the timber line. "*Stits*" (Shields) is the name given to those implacable grey heights. Like twelve strong warriors, they stand shoulder to shoulder in a defensive semicircle and turn to the south with shields upraised.

The towering peaks have been cut into a network of valleys by the passing of glaciers long ago. Today there are no glaciers in the Tatras, but their memory remains in scores of tiny lakes — so clear, so blue, so deep that the Slovaks call them "the eyes of the sea."

Here, they say, that great sea on whose shore the Slavs were born and from which they were driven eastward into exile, comes up into a high place to watch over its sons and to hold converse with God.

I had gone by train, down from Orava past Istebna, where an ancient wooden church with shingled domes and tower, one of the four that are left of King Leopold's permitted twenty-two, stands in a grove of mighty beech trees, to Kralovamy on the main line. Then, eastward through familiar Ružomberok — a wave out of the carriage window to Likava supplanted now in my affections — and so to Svaty Mikulas. This flat, dusty little market town gathered about its thirteenth-century stone church fortified with a belligerent tower and wall, rivals Svaty Martin as a political rendezvous.

In Svaty Mikulas' market place, I remember, I bought the finest watermelon of my life — perfectly round, not more than fourteen inches in diameter, its interior an enticing deep pink, and so ripe that at the first incision of the knife it fell apart in two succulent halves. I sat under a red berried ash tree beyond the town and feasted and sent up paeans of gratitude for the heat and the

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flies and the greasy table covers of the Europa's restaurant that had prompted this gypsy meal.

Slovakia's restaurants are not chief of its charms. Those at the spas are sufficiently cosmopolitan to give you something other than the greasy stewed pork and veal and underdone potatoes and soggy dumpling which the Czechs and the Slovaks seem to eat with impunity. And even at the others, as at the railroad restaurants, one can usually order cold Prague ham, and cheese and eggs and wiener schnitzel. But beyond these the menu lags. There seems no imminent likelihood of Slovakia's producing a gourmet.

Once, I reckoned that for eight days I had subsisted on "white" coffee, salted bread, twists, wiener schnitzel, sliced cucumbers and beer. And melons. I survived, nor fell ill. And the Tatras were worth it. But occasionally one's thoughts would stray to the fleshpots of Vienna and Paris.

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South of Svaty Mikulas the romantic rock-walled valley of Demanova opens into the heart of the Nizke Tatry. Its limestone walls are threaded by a series of stalactite caves, a subterranean world of terrifying beauty. One climbs from cavern to cavern; several, like the great Cathedral of Liberty, are more than one hundred and fifty feet in height, their ceilings studded with glistening stalactites — white and amber and rosy pink and cool violet blue, a vaulting that mocks our ideas of Time. One cave is all of ice like that of Dobsina. How far these caverns extend and the wonders of them all is still a matter of conjecture.

Just east of Svaty Mikulas the full isolated grandeur

of the Vysoke Tatry rises to the north. Away to the south roll the forest-wrapped Nizke Tatry. It is a panorama worth coming all those thousands of miles to see. The peaks of the High Tatras were bare of snow there in early September. Only in the deep hidden crevasses the drifts lie all the year round.

Several little villages — Važec and Stola and Mengusovec — crouch under the lee of the rolling downs at the base of the mountains. Long ago the men of these villages distinguished themselves in the Polish wars. As a reward the Magyars granted them the right to wear the sword like noblemen. They are not picturesque, these northern Slovak villages. The poor cottages of unpainted boards stand so close as almost to touch each other. There is not a tree, not a garden, not a flower in the whole settlement. Only on Sunday, when the doors open and the folk turn churchward, are the paths ablaze with the women's tall headdresses set off with plumes of spun glass, beads, tinsel, artificial flowers and fluttering cherry-colored ribbons. The young men of Važec wear tyrolean hats adorned with tall pheasant feathers and leather vests with rosettes of red worsted.

Važec has its own version of the Cinderella story. Here in this village, so the tale goes, lived a widow with her own daughter, whom she loved, and the child of her dead husband, whom she hated.

One day in midwinter she said to her stepdaughter, "See, Mariška, here is a basket. Go into the mountains and fill it with violets. And see that you do not come back without them."

Then she put Mariška out of the door and bolted it after her.

"That is the last we shall see of that one," she said.

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Mariška went by the path up into the Vysoké Tatry. It was very cold. The snow lay deep. The rabbits huddled in their warm holes and the great eagles brooded on their nests. "Where will I find violets now?" said Mariška, and she wept bitterly.

Presently she came to the top of the highest mountain of them all. There she saw twelve hooded figures seated around another mightier than they. That was the Lord of Time.

"Please, sir," said Mariška, "can you tell me where I will find violets?"

"Violets in January?" said the Lord of Time. Then he made Mariška tell him all about her cruel stepmother. When she had done, he spoke to one of the twelve hooded figures about his throne:

"*Kyveten*, (April)¹ open thy cloak!" *Kyveten* put back his cloak and there were violets, thousands of them. Mariška filled her basket. Then she thanked the Lord of Time and went skipping down the mountainside and knocked at her stepmother's door.

"Let me in. I have brought your violets," she said.

So her stepmother let her in. And she wondered and lay awake that night thinking what she could do to rid herself of her stepdaughter.

Several days after she called Mariška and said: "Take this basket and go into the mountains and fill it with strawberries. And, mind you, don't come back without them."

Then she put Mariška out of the door and bolted it and sat herself down by the fire. "She won't come back this time," she said to her own daughter whom she loved.

¹ The Czech names for the months have a poetic significance. Literally: *Kyveten*, "Blossoming"; *Červen*, "Rosy"; *Listopad*, "Fall of the Leaf."

Mariška went straightway to the mountain top where she had seen the Lord of Time and the twelve hooded figures.

"Why have you come here?" said the Lord of Time.

Mariška told him. This time it was strawberries her stepmother demanded. Strawberries in January!

"Cerven, (June)" said the Lord of Time, "open thy cloak!" Cerven put back the fold of his cloak and there, within it, grew strawberries — many, many of them. Mariška filled her basket and thanked the Lord of Time and went down the mountain to Važec. She rapped on her stepmother's door. "Let me in. I have brought you the strawberries," she said.

This time her stepmother made Mariška tell her where she had found the violets and strawberries. On the next day, she said to her own daughter, "Come, we will go into the Vysoke Tatry and see these things for ourselves."

So they went.

Presently they came to the high peak of Gerlach and there they saw the Lord of Time and the twelve hooded figures about him.

"What brings you here?" said the Lord of Time.

"We would like some apples," said the woman.

"Apples? In January?" said the Lord of Time.

"Of course," said the woman, "and be quick about it, old man. My feet are quite cold standing here in the snow."

"Listopad, (November) take up thy staff!" said the Lord of Time.

Listopad lifted his staff, which was made of a bare oak tree, and he drove the woman and her daughter down from the mountain top. The path was covered with ice and they ran so fast they fell. They fell and fell

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and presently they fell into the lake Rybie Pleso. And there they were drowned and Mariška has lived happily ever since in her house in Važec.

By good fortune, I had that first clear view of the Vysoke Tatry with the sun shining bright on their shields. On the next day a thick blanket of cloud hid them from sight. The motor bus, mounting from Strba to Strbske Pleso, felt its way up the steep and around the hairpin curves by blind instinct.

All that day I waited forlornly for the view which — if the picture post cards were to be believed — lay just behind that impenetrable veil. All that night I shivered under the inadequacy of a feather bed done up in a linen sheet. If anything can penetrate one of those feather stuffed coverings it is a Tatra mist.

But with morning . . .

Directly below and not fifty feet from my balcony was a blue lake girdled by dark forests. The famous pleso of Strba, forty-five hundred feet above sea level. And, above the forests, the majestic peaks — Krivan, Salisko, Satan, Velka Vysoka, Koncista, Gerlach — the last the highest of them all, 8655 feet.

One had a sense of awe at being thus on intimate terms with great heights. Their sides were furrowed with innumerable wrinkles. They were like the faces of the old men one meets on Slovakia's hillsides — faces that "have looked on tempests and have not been shaken."

Below stairs there was the bustle of walking parties setting out; indomitable Czechs and Germans bent on adding new trophies to their alpenstocks. There was a party of chamois hunters. And there were two or three

Hungarians looking very scornful of all this pedestrianism. No true Magyar ever walks unless compelled to do so. Their forbears were born in the saddle; they have the horseman's disdain of travel afoot.

Strbske Pleso, Vysne Hagy, Polianka, Staré Smokovec, Tatran Lomnica — all these resorts with hotels and dependencies and villas and saintoria with boxes of determinedly cheerful red geraniums form a cordon around the Vysoke Tatry just below the spring of the great peaks. A little electric railroad and many trails cut through the forests connect them. The Vysoke Tatry are Czechoslovakia's summer playground. They are also a favorite resort for winter sports.

From Tatran Lomnica, the station lying furthest to the east, I set out afoot with my rucksack of Silesian memories, to Matliary, and then by a steep, straight, downward path to join the high road in the valley. The forests pressed close against the path. At their edge flowered blue hare bells and tall blue gentians, and thousands of tiny orange and crimson mushrooms.

All that morning and into the early afternoon I walked in the clear, cool mountain air, breathing the pungency of the pines. The woman at the tourist's house in Tatran Lomnica had assured me that the motor bus from Kežmarok to Podolinec passed the crossroads shortly after three in the afternoon. I had only to walk down the mountain side and sit on a stone by the crossroad and flag it as it came by.

I was sitting there, reading *The Romany Rye*, when something advancing down the highroad toward me caught my eye, something that sparkled and glistened, that reflected the sunlight in dozens of scintillating flashes.

The something proved to be a travelling glazier. He carried a wooden rack on his back and this was filled with panes of glass and pieces of tin. From his wide leather belt hung soldering tools, great scissors, knives and files — all the tools of a tinker's trade.

He stopped at sight of me, shot me a sharp glance, then gave greeting in German.

"*Die dame* is a wayfarer too," he said, nodding at my rucksack. "But she will not have come from so far as I."

"Where do you come from?" I asked.

"Today from Kežmarok; a month ago from Košice; and since spring set in from Zvornik. That is in Bosnia," he said importantly.

"That is a long journey," I agreed. "You must see many interesting things as you go."

"Wherever one goes people are very much the same," said the glazier. "That is disappointing. When I first started to go about like this my heart used to beat with expectation when I came into a new village. 'Now,' I said to myself, 'now I shall hear and see something new and strange.' But I never did. The things the folks in one village said were exactly the same that I heard said in every other village. In Kežmarok yesterday they were saying the same things about the government and the potato crop that I heard said in Košice a month ago."

"King Solomon said, 'There is nothing new under the sun,'" I reminded him.

"And he was right. *Bogami*." The glazier slapped his knee. "We say in my country, 'Thirst and kisses are the same for all men.'"

"There is that village in Hungary," I said, "where

lately the women have poisoned their husbands. I have read about it in the papers. That is unusual."

"Well, yes," he admitted grudgingly. "But you know the village folk are so eager to be alike that soon they will begin saying the same thing happened here, and here and here.

"I will tell you, though," he went on, "something that is different. Something that at least no other place can lay claim to. Look up there at that mountain peak. *Lomničky stit* it is called. Well, up there is a lake, so high that no one has ever climbed to it. Its waters have been there since the flood. On the lake floats one of the planks from Noah's ark. On the Day of Judgment this will become a ship and all the Jews will find places on it and will sail away to the Promised Land. I have heard that story in Cracow where it is solemnly believed."

A rumble down the road gave warning of the approaching motor bus. I flagged it, gave the philosophic glazier a "*glückliche reise*" and we rolled away.

The road swept up the valley of the Hornad through Spisska Bela, oldest of all the sixteen free German towns of the Spis country. It is named for that Hungarian king who chartered them. Spisska Bela dates from the eleventh century. It has an interesting Gothic church, whitewashed as are most of the stone buildings hereabouts, but still showing strong vaulting and some bits of quaint thirteenth century carvings.

Podolinec was another white town set snugly within strong old ramparts. Jiskra besieged it; later it was a Thököly stronghold.

I found a lodging at its tiny inn, and slept — to be waked before the dawn, by the low-drawn note of a bugle under my window. In the dark of the street stood a

figure with a lantern. Behind him crowded a press of darker, bulkier shapes — no watchman but Podolinec's cowherd calling round at each door for his charges to lead them out to pasture on the alpine meadows of the Tatry.

But modernism has penetrated even to Podolinec. Handbills, printed in German and in Slovak, announced the coming of a "Psychologist — All the secrets of the future revealed. Autosuggestion — Spiritualism — Character through handwriting — Coueism — Phrenology — Is there a Life after Death? "



CHAPTER NINE

IN THE SPIS COUNTRY



THE Vysoka Tatry drop away on the north into Poland. That slope is more gradual and far less ruggedly picturesque than the face they turn to Slovakia. Out of them winds the Dunajec. It flows eastward under the lee of Pieniny, the great mountain which lifts its five peaks apart from the others of the Tatra group, then for six miles through a narrow tortuous gorge forming the boundary between Czechoslovakia and Poland.

Where the gorge begins, under the shadow of Pieniny stands the Red Cloister. Carthusian monks built their monastery here in 1319. They roofed church and refectory and the long line of individual dwellings within the tall wall with ruddy tiles brought from other houses of the order in the South. These, the only red roofs in that land of dark timbered dwellings, became a landmark. The memory of them remains when the monastery itself is as ruined as Skalka, and the name of its patron saint has been forgotten.

The Red Cloister watched over old Hungary's gate

into Poland, a gate which opened only one way — to the north. The gorge is too straight and too broken by rapids to allow the passage of boats upstream. Only the rafts can live in those waters and these must run with the river.

Like many other religious houses in Slovakia, the Red Cloister was disestablished by order of Joseph II in the eighteenth century. Before that, in the religious wars, it had suffered many vicissitudes. Stephen Bathory burned it in 1576 on his way to Cracow to claim the Polish crown. In 1630 Paul Rakočzy rebuilt the ruin. His name and fame, "Prince of Hungary," are carved on the lordly entrance gate. The monks of the Red Cloister lived in state befitting their noble birth.

The Rakočzys are closely identified with the monastery's fortunes. Here in 1647 George Rakočzy assembled his forces to join Charles Augustus of Sweden in Poland. Log rafts carried his Haiduks down the Dunajec through the narrow gorge to the open plain. In 1705, ill-fated Francis Rakočzy, last of the line and the stepson of Emerich Thököly, fleeing from his prison at Spisska Ncva Ves, hid in the Red Cloister until he could make his way to safety in Poland.

Now the wild has taken it back. The walled close is choked with brambles. The delicate Gothic apse of its fourteenth century chapel rises like a lily from the waste. And over all broods the massive Pieniny unperturbed.

I went on to Červený Klastor (Red Cloister) by motor bus. The bus had come from Kežmarok. When it drew up for me at the Falcon Inn in Podolinec it carried already three other tourists — two poles, a husband and



ORAVA CASTLE BURSTS ON YOU LIKE A FANFARE OF
TRUMPETS



THE HIGH TATRAS RISE MAJESTICALLY



A YOUNG MAN OF VAŽEC



A YOUNG GIRL OF VAŽEC

wife from Lodz who had been vacationing in the Vysoke Tatry and were now going home, and a young bank clerk from Leipsic on a holiday. The three pushed aside their rucksacks and welcomed me. Was I too bound for the Red Cloister?

I was.

And did I intend to make the trip down the gorge of the Dunajec on the rafts?

I did.

Good! Then let us make ourselves a party of four to go together. The raftsmen would not take fewer than four passengers at a time. Sometimes one waited at the boat stage half a day for luck to bring another traveller.

The rafts used for the excursion down the Dunajec are contrived of hollowed out pine logs. Four are lashed together and the interstices stuffed with spruce boughs. Two planks are laid across the logs. On these the passengers sit, resting their feet in the hollows of the logs. Two polers push the rude craft into the current. For a moment it hesitates — the river fingers it tentatively — then it seizes the raft.

“*Eja!*” cry bowman and helmsman together. You are off.

The walls of the gorge rise in two opposing palisades that spring into pinnacles and turrets of grey rock five hundred feet above your head. Their summits are crowned with dark forests — the haunt of Polish eagles. The gorge twists, winds, turns upon itself. At no point is it more than fifty feet across. And the mountain stream fills it completely.

The river is the haunt of fine salmon. We passed a shallow cave close to the water's edge whose walls were blackened with the smoke of the fires the fishermen light

to call the fish. Standing on the rafts they spear them from the water. Once we met two men wading along the shore, each man towing two logs — a raft going upstream. It takes scarcely an hour to make the journey from Červený Kláštor to the opposite end of the gorge, a distance of six miles. To tow the logs back to the starting place requires half a day.

Along the shore which is Czechoslovakia a narrow road has been cut into the cliff. The Leipsic bank clerk and I are to come back by it in a low, yellow-painted cart filled with straw and driven by a country man who sits sidewise on the front axle and drives his great haunched roan horse by striking it across the hocks. The Poles, once arrived at the northern end of the gorge, find themselves at home and go on that afternoon to S'zczawnica, a small spa on the Polish side of the Tatras.

“*Eja!*” cries the bowman.

Now it is a warning. The dark amber water is broken into treacherous white ripples — the rapids. Helmsman and bowman work fiercely to keep the raft in its course and off the jagged shelf of rocks that reaches greedily into the channel. The spray dashes over us; the water wells up through the stuffing of spruce boughs. With spasmodic twitchings the raft shoots the white water to the quiet of the russet brown pool beyond.

The helmsman breathes a deep sigh. Then, to call the echo from the Falcon Rock, he breaks into a snatch of song:

“Belgrade, Belgrade,
On the Turkish frontier;
Many a mother's son
Has gone there.

Mothers with sons at war,
Sleep not too late;
Watch the sunrise to know
Thy son's fate.

Comes the sun up blood-red —
Today thy son dies.
Comes it with clouds enwrapped —
Shrouded he lies."

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It is an anomaly that the towns of the Spis which are not Slovak at all, neither Magyar, but German founded by colonists from Saxony in the thirteenth century, should still present characteristics which seem more truly Slav than many other settlements between the Vah and the Tisza. This is true of Banska Bystrica, another German town, but with more than a suspicion of the Slavic east in its domes and towers. And it is true of Kežmarok.

This old farming town, one of the sixteen free towns of the Spis with a royal charter since 1380, lifts its towers toward the eastern bulwark of the Vysoke Tatry. It gathers prudently about its white church of the Holy Cross, Svaty Kriz, which raises one shoulder higher than the other in a perpetual shrug of disdain. A line of tiny loopholes leads your eye upward to the sentinel's walk about its parapet. This is covered as by a broad hat with a conical crown from which an additional parapet bristles with painted guidons. Kežmarok's is a church militant. There is about it the blare of trumpets.

The coming of the Germans to the Spis has its own legend. These people followed the piping of a rat

catcher. He lead them from their Rhineland homes across Slovakia to Transylvania, which they called "Siebenbergen," in memory of the seven great cities of the Rhine. But a few on the way sat down to rest. And the rat catcher passed on, and they lost his piping and so remained to settle the Spis country.

Svaty Kriz's tall, peering tower dominates Kežmarok. It throws its afternoon shadow over the lower belfry, built in the sixteenth century and called for its richness of sagraffito ornament, its delicately balanced cornice and triple arched windows that carry the hint of palaces in Constantinople — the Golden Tower.

Old Hungary turned its eyes and its aims eastward. The men who followed Hunyadi to the gates of Belgrade, who contested with Suleiman for Transylvania — the present Roumania — brought back to the sterner land of the Tatras dreams of oriental loveliness. Perhaps that is the explanation of the eastern element that has crept into the Slovak towns.

The architect who raised the Golden Tower moved on down the Hornad to Poprad Velka and there built a second tower of the same design but with less elaborate ornamentation.

The castle of the Thökölys stands at the northern end of Kežmarok. The farmers' carts, trough-shaped and made of closely woven wicker, creak under its walls as they come in on market days. An older stronghold of the family, a really stately thirteenth century castle with a magnificent fortified gateway, rises on a hill at Stara L'ubovna beyond Podolinec.

The Kežmarok castle dates from the sixteenth century. Its walls, with their frequent round bastions, lift a beau-

tiful Renaissance coping above the trees and ivy that have grown up from the old moat. You enter through a tower gate which shows the arms of Stefan Thököly and the date 1678. The castle within the wall is a sober, Calvinistic stronghold. There is none of the romance of Orava, no trace of the elegance that prevailed at Likava.

Parts of the castle are still habitable. It seems in keeping with its past that these should be used for a barracks. Troops were drilling in the wide courtyard. Under a lime tree sat a sergeant whose campaign ribbons told of his service in the legion. He was recounting a story to a group of wide-eyed, awkward recruits newly sent up from Bratislava for their eighteen months compulsory military service.

With a zeal that is characteristically Czech the authorities make this term a period of extended education. Recruits from Ruthenia and isolated villages of Slovakia who can neither read nor write are set to their books. There are lectures and lending libraries — and a censor.

At that time old Prague newspapers were filled with the controversy over the banning of Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* in the soldiers' libraries.

A little girl from the porter's lodge brought an iron key, fully fourteen inches long, to unlock for me the castle chapel. It has a beautiful door set between columns which support a pediment with the Thököly arms. The wide entrance is fitted with a screen of finely panelled oak studded with old iron bosses like roses. But within, the chapel was damp and gloomy and choked with dust; a place of tarnished baroque altars and heavy tombs and a rococo pulpit all black and peeling gold and fluttering rags of soiled crimson brocade, that started from one wall like a bit of fungous growth.

Emerich Thököly was born in the Kežmarok castle in 1657. He returned here after that first exile in Poland at the head of his own army and proceeded to make himself master of the Spis. Here came the Sultan's emissary with an offer from the Porte to acknowledge Thököly as King of Hungary on condition of a payment of forty thousand sequins yearly.

Emerich lies buried in the new Evangelical church at the opposite end of Kežmarok. The body was brought from the cemetery at Nicomedia in 1906. The bronze sarcophagus is hung with the faded, bullet-riddled banners that once fluttered defiance of Austria along the highroads of the Spis.

The new church has already undergone one conversion. It was begun by the Kežmarok Jews as a synagogue. Then the Lutherans bought it. The five-pointed stars of David on the windows and walls have taken on an Epiphany significance.

It stands very blatant and aggressive beside the older Protestant church completed in 1717 and no longer used except on one or two memorial days each year.

This is considered by antiquarians the most valuable wooden building in Slovakia. Like the church at Garoušek and that at Istebna on the Orava, Kežmarok's is one of the original twenty-two which Emperor Charles permitted his Slovak Protestant subjects. The Spis folk kept the letter of the emperor's law; no nails were used in its building. The wooden walls, plastered over on the outside now are held together by wooden pegs. But the beams and the posts that uphold the peaked gables they carved with a richness unknown to stone. The flat-boarded sides they painted with frescoes, the high pulpit with its finely curving stair they adorned with the figures

of angels and prophets carved from wood, and among these King Saul, crowned and magnificent, with defiance in his hand. The face of Saul is the face of Emerich Thököly.

Tradition says that Charles Augustus' Swedes helped with the wooden church's building and that several of them lie buried beneath its altar.

For five weeks Slovakia had basked under an intense dry heat. From horizon to horizon the heavens had spread their cloudless blue dome to meet the golden stubble of the wheat fields. Every breeze brought the sweetness of the stacked grain drying in the sun; the choking white dust powdered the roadside and lay so thick on clover and chicory that the bees buzzed angrily, balked of their due, and the chaff sent flying by that rhythmic swish and beat of the flails on the stone threshing floors.

The petitions breathed at the foot of the Calvaries, the garlands of wheat and poppies bound reverently about the crossed feet of the Crucified One, the lanterns lighted in Panny Marie's honor in the July pilgrimages had brought a good harvest.

Now, long lines of wicker carts began to take the road to the miller's. Tense faces relaxed. In the sunset groups outside the *hostinec's* doors men spoke with the confidence that is born of well-filled barns and mounting straw stacks. They began to cast appraising eyes to the east with thoughts of the Fall sowing. Then came the rain.

Those grey veils blown across the face of Likava, the cloud descended upon the peaks of the Vysoke Tatry — these had been warnings. Now the heavens opened upon

Kežmarok. The rain pounded fiercely upon the peaked roofs; it turned the hard-packed clay of the market place to a sea of brown mud in which countryfolk, horses and cattle wallowed in common misery.

It beat upon and into the creaking motor bus which took me and two other passengers the eight miles to Levoča. The road wound about, mounted and dropped down over the long roll of the Spisslands. I rubbed a spying place on the pane of the window nearest me and looked out across a world of sodden fields — brown, striped with the staring green of cabbage patches.

At Mahalovce, by the high white wall of a white church — a church fortified like a fourteenth century castle — a lantern twinkled in the storm. We stopped, the one other woman passenger descended and the lantern bobbed uncertainly down a lane. We went on.

If there was choice of hotels in Levoča the bus driver gave me none. He drew up before a door at the end of the town's long *namesti* and stuck his head out of the omnibus to halloo loudly.

The halloo brought a girl who threw back the door revealing a long, stone paved and vaulted tunnel, the far end of which was divided equally between stable and kitchen. She caught up my bag and me by the arm and drew us in. Soon I was sitting on a stool in front of the kitchen fire. While the inn's mistress beat up eggs for an omelet, the youngest daughter opened my bag and found me dry shoes, and the eldest, who was called Gabriela, a magnificent, dark-eyed, burning-cheeked beauty — the family had more than a tincture of Magyar blood — sliced cucumbers into a bowl for my supper, not stopping the while her light badinage with the young man stretched in the ingle nook.

And supper over, the youngest daughter took my bag, the eldest a candle, and with the young man following close to keep her from being afraid on the stairs, we went up a long flight of stone steps and along an echoing corridor to a chamber that was hung with purple as for the entombing of an archbishop. There waited a great black and gold catafalque of a bed, all white lace over red-covered feather *deckes*. In one corner glimmered a tall white porcelain stove — like a tombstone.

The youngest daughter put down my bag, the eldest gave over the candle to me.

“Guten nacht, fraülein.”

Youth and love and laughter went away down the echoing stone corridor and left me there. . . .

But in the morning the sun shone. I threw wide my shutters on a triangular bit of garden. A red-fezzed ice-cream vendor trundled his cart down the street and called enticingly. . . .

Levoča is the capital of the Spis. It has been called the Slovak Nuremberg; a contradiction of terms, for Levoča, unlike Kežmarok, is not Slovak at all, but pure German. German the long market place with its lines of clipped plane trees; German the rows of fine old high-gabled houses, many like that of the Thurzos with magnificent Renaissance façades and inner courts overlooked by arcaded galleries; German the group of church and town hall standing in the center of the market place.

There is a third building there too, a modern Lutheran church, which occupies the site of the old iron cage, the *“ketterhauschen,”* in which all girls found on Levoča's streets after nine o'clock at night were locked up for twenty-four hours. The ruling and the cage remained

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in force until the middle of the last century. Up to that time, too, it was the custom to hold public executions in Levoča's square. And the stocks outside the town hall were not mere relics of a past barbarism.

If the city fathers of Levoča were reproached for their harshness to women, they gave the White Lady for excuse. Juliana Geči was her name. She lived in the Thurzo house on the square and her husband was captain general of Levoča in 1710 during the last years of the Rakočzy rebellion. In his keeping were the three keys which unlocked the three gates that kept Levoča safe.

When the Austrian forces arrived outside Levoča, at their head was a Count Andrassy. Perhaps in quieter days he and Juliana Geči had known and loved each other; perhaps the Count besieging, still found opportunity for lovemaking. From the Thurzo house a long underground passage leads to a bastion of the town wall in which is a small gate.

One night Juliana stole the three keys from her husband's keeping. She passed down the tunnel to the little gate and there she delivered them into Andrassy's hand. In an hour the Austrians had taken Levoča. Captain Geči was the first to be killed.

"And Juliana?" I asked.

I was told this story by an engaging small boy who came and sat beside me on the bench outside the hotel door while we ate tiny plums, no bigger than a pigeon's egg, yellow as gold and tasting like honey, that I had bought from one of the market stalls.

Small Ignat tucked the two remaining plums one into his right cheek, one into his left, before replying:

"You see that big stone at the upper end of the market

place? That is where Count Andrassy hanged Juliana Geči for a traitor. So died *die weisse frau!* ”

He spat the two plum pits with commendable accuracy and a scorn of false women.

“ Now I will show you the little gate in the wall where she went that night. . . . ”

The wall and the gate remain. And an unknown hand has painted a likeness of the White Lady behind the grating, bending to unlock the door and beckoning eternally to the relentless Andrassy.

Levoča's fifteenth century Town Hall stands sturdily on deep arcades with an upper loggia and frescoes of civic virtues along its north wall. The slope of the roof is lifted by a crown of ornamental gables. Within are fine chambers and the guild hall still lighted by crystal chandeliers, the gift to Levoča of the city of Venice.

Levoča, like other towns of the Spis, was a settlement of linen weavers. Its goods were sold throughout Poland, Italy and the Balkans. The ancient wooden dies and samples of the fabrics are still to be seen in the municipal museum. But the custodian is prouder far of the stuffed calf with two heads and a pair of Siamese twins born in Levoča in 1554 and proudly preserved to this day.

The Town Hall and the equally ancient church of St. James with its pilgrims shells, its carved and gilded altars, the work of Master Paulus of Cracow in the fifteenth century, and its fourteenth century frescoes of the legend of St. Dorothy, a favorite patron of Saxon maidens, are enough to distinguish Levoča from all other towns of Slovakia and to win for it that comparison with the Bavarian city.

In the church are the seats of the town's guild masters,

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each with the arms of the guild carved upon its high back. Not even King Matus Corvinus, who had his own pew in Levoča's church, sat more proudly than these master weavers and pewterers and wood carvers, who on their own account entered into treaties with Naples and Venice and Nuremberg and Cracow.

The Thurzos, who derived no small part of their fortune from these same honest industries, have their own burial chapel. Four counts Thurzo lie there, one with his countess beside him. She was, it would seem, a garrulous lady only silenced by Death. The sculptor has carved her with her chin tightly bound and a painted and astounded expression of countenance.

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I stayed on in Levoča. There was a charm about the quiet old town with its high-gabled houses and gardens where the dahlias and marigolds were tied to stakes upholding shining balls of colored glass such as we know only on Christmas trees.

I walked out to Mariansky Vrch, the goal of pilgrimages on July second, but at all other times deserted. At the time of the wakes, one may see the beautiful ornate costumes of the Spis, the lace veils of the women, their full skirts of plum-colored brocade, their jeweled brooches and earrings, all very different from the dress seen in southern Slovakia.

Gabriela's courtship progressed steadily. The young man was a stone mason and engaged to make repairs on the Town Hall. At intervals all day long he darted across the square — between trowelfuls as it were — to feast his eyes on his beloved.

I am at breakfast and Gabriela comes with the poppy seed rolls. A shadow darkens the low window. The young man's head and shoulders come suddenly into the room.

"Gabriela!"

"František!"

The poppy seed rolls tumble to the floor, unregarded.

I wondered if the Corporation paid František by the hour or the job. But perhaps — and wisely — they considered that the future of Levoča was assured no less by a happy courtship than by a new flight of steps in its Town Hall.

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And in Levoča I ran full tilt into the arms of adventure; adventure in the guise of a comfortable-looking, middle-aged woman who sat in a large, bent wood rocking chair in the inn doorway. She sat and rocked and surveyed the square which bloomed with the weekly market. She surveyed me. Then she spoke:

"Say, aren't you an American?"

Like myself, Mrs. Y—— was a wayfarer along the roads of Slovakia. But for her the journey was one of remembrance. She had been born in the hamlet of Mahalovce, baptized and confirmed in the old white church within its frowning wall and tower gate. At sixteen, she had gone to America.

"And this is my first time to come back to the old country — after thirty-three years. Time and again, I've thought I'd come. But something always came up to stop me. John's business wasn't so good — we've got a hardware store in G——, or the children needed me, or something. But this year I said to John, 'Now I'm go-

ing. You and the girls'll have to get along the best you can for three months.' And here I am. Things don't change over here," she went on. "Everything's just like it was thirty-three years ago, except now instead of being Hungarians, my folks are all Czechoslovaks. Not that it matters much to us, we being Germans. Real Zipsers. My father was a trader; used to drive all over the Zips to the markets and sell the people dress goods. It's a good business. Now it's my brother's. I used to like to go along with my father when I was a little girl, and so I came along with my brother this trip. That's why I'm here. Yesterday Poprad Velka; today Levoča; tomorrow Spisska Podhradie. That's the way it goes.

"Well, I guess it isn't much like automobile riding in America; still, you do see the country."

And then she invited me to go along.

The arch, framed by the bellying canvas top of the calico trader's covered wagon, was filled with pale primrose sky. Over the rounded flanks of the two strong Magyar horses I looked across the fields. Behind us, glimpsed like a twinkling star through the tiny window in the back of the cart, was the sunset. I sat on the wagon's seat beside Elgart Zeyer; Mrs. Y—— occupied a couch made up of bolts of calico and woolen cloth just behind us.

So we drove out of Levoča's city gate bound for Spisska Podhradie, seventeen miles off. What Spisska Podhradie might be I had no very clear idea. But it lay to the east — the way my road ran. And I knew "Podhradie" meant "Below the Castle." What more would a traveller in romance require?

The wagon was like many I had seen drawn up in the weekly markets. These great tented vehicles travel the roads of Slovakia, Poland and Hungary. The goods — bolts of calico, linen and woolen cloth — are stacked along the sides, at the back stands a small stove with projecting tin chimney. All manner of living necessities are hung from the hoops of the canvas roof — and boards, trestles, pails, et cetera are suspended beneath the wagon itself.

Arrived at the market scene, the horses are taken out and stabled in the inn yard; one side of the wagon lets down to form a rack for the display of the goods. Trestles and boards form a counter, and a calico curtain discreetly hides the family life, birth and death that goes on meanwhile within the wagon's cavernous interior.

"It isn't the same as automobiling in America," Mrs. Y—— said again.

Elgart Zeyer clucked to his horses. "Already, there are some traders who talk about changing to automobiles," he said. "But I don't know. After all, one can sell at only six markets in the week and when the days for these are set so as to allow the merchants to travel from one to the next — what more would an automobile do?"

He told me about his trade. The common wear of the Spis women is a dark blue calico stamped with a design in white. But each village it seems has its individual taste in the pattern. "No use showing a wheat sheaf design in a town where poppies are all the rage. And in another the only goods the women will look at has an ivy leaf in white."

"I've thought about it often," he went on. "That and the difference in the Slovak's dress. Why, the

clothes in one village will be so different from what they wear in the next one. Yet everybody in each village will be dressed the same. I figure it out this way. Sometime there was a woman in each of these places who was beautiful. All the other women were envious of her. And what did they do? Why, just what women have always done. They copied her clothes. Exactly! They imitated the embroidery she worked on her sleeves. All the plain and ugly women did this and thought it would make them beautiful and sought after by the men, too. Now, no one remembers the names of those beautiful women. But their clothes live forever."

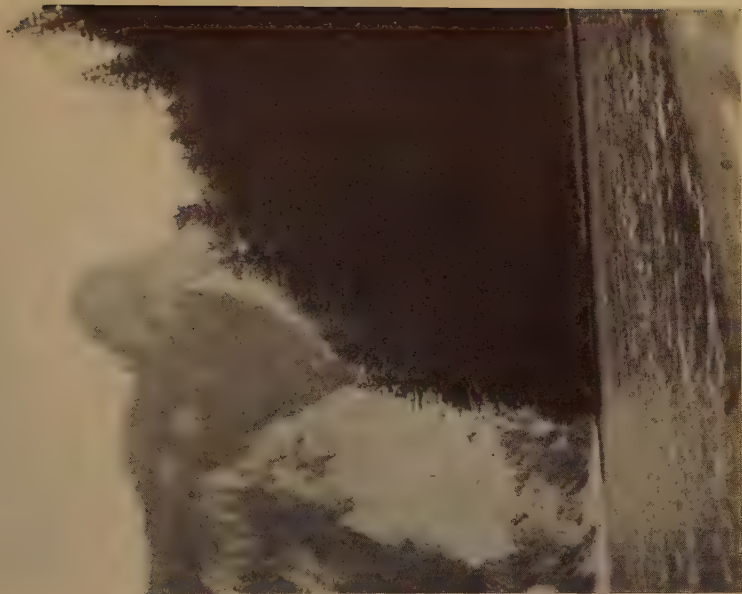
The sun went down and the world of rolling fields was bathed in tender light. The cabbages, hundreds of thousands of that honest vegetable striping the interminable wheat fields, gleamed as though silvered. The cabbage might be the symbol of the Spis country. The gathering of them before the frost is an occasion for ceremony — a true Thanksgiving. The *pfarer* preaches from an appropriate text and each Zipser family sits down to feast on its historic "kraut-podge" which is, as nearly as I understood Mrs. Y——'s explanation, an enormous sponge cake smothered in stewed cabbage.

At Spisske Vlachy we stopped for supper. The innkeeper's wife was on the lookout for us. She had need of a new bodice and a pair of curtains for her parlor. And she counted on the coming of Elgart Zeyer to bring these to her door. Two slatternly gypsy girls were loitering before the inn door; one with a baby at her breast. They fingered the rolls of cloth and whispered together in Romany before making their purchase of orange calico and a meter of cerise ribbon.

Then on again. It was dark now. The wagon's arch



THE PIENINY



THE FALCON ROCK IN THE GORGE OF THE
DUNAJEC



WHERE EMERICH THÖKÖLY WAS BORN — KEŽMAROK



THE CHURCH OF SVATY KRIZ AND THE GOLDEN TOWER —
KEZMAROK

framed a patch of sky with Charles' Wain driving across it. The night air was sweet with rain-washed clover; the sound of the horses' hoofs on the country road strangely comforting. Mrs. Y—— dozed, her head against the canvas wagon side. Elgart Zeyer and I rode in silence.

The road ran along a valley, then began to mount; the horses strained at the traces.

"See!" said Elgart Zeyer and pointed with his whip to a dark mass crowning the hill. The Church of St. Martin, the Cathedral of the Spis. "When my ancestors, who were Saxons, came here in the thirteenth century, the Cathedral of St. Martin belonged to the Greek Orthodox Church. The Slavs said Saints Cyril and Methodius had founded it there. But the Saxons were strong adherents to the Roman Catholic church. They soon converted the Slovaks of the Spis to their way of thinking."

The road curved around the hill top. One saw the great church and its adjoining seminaries black against the stars. Then we dropped down a long steep hill. The wagon creaked protestingly against the brake. At the bottom of the hill a few lights twinkled—Spisska Podhradie.

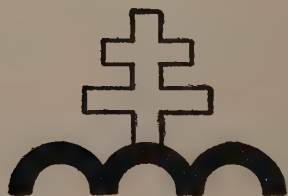
We drove across a wooden bridge and up to the gate of the inn. Elgart Zeyer leaned out, rapped on wooden panels with his whip.

A voice replied, bolts were drawn, the gate thrown back. We drove into the courtyard. Other carts were there before us. Two men crouched over a tiny fire watching a pot boil. A lad lay stretched on a bundle of straw beside the calf he had driven to market. About and under the carts and the munching horses, were sheep,

fowls, cats and a lazy dog. The man who had opened the gate greeted Elgart Zeyer as an old friend.

A barefoot girl in a very tight peacock blue bodice over a pink skirt, her braid wound with impertinent green ribbons, came with a lamp. She kicked the fowls off the steps leading to the gallery so that Mrs. Y—— and I might mount, and unlocked the doors of two upper rooms.

And so — for the second time in this chapter — to bed.





LEVOČA IS CALLED "THE SLOVAK NUREMBERG"



THE WHITE LADY OF LEVOČA



A MADONNA OF THE TATRAS

CHAPTER TEN

HOW FAIRY TALES ARE BORN



THE regiment on march which came into Spisska Podhradie shortly before dawn was a blessing in dusty disguise; their bugles waked me; I leaned out my window to see what that fanfare might portend and the venerable, royal castle of

Spis, snow white and glistening on its noble green headland, was my morning draught.

The sun was coming up behind it. Slowly the limestone walls running down the slope to enclose five separate courtyards, the pinnacle palace worn and frail like an aged aristocrat who has outlived his generation and waits alone for the coming of kind Death, the indomitable round tower rising from the central height — as it might be the proud lift of that old aristocrat's chin — slowly all these were suffused with a rosy opalescence, a false youth. . . .

The regiment flowed in a brown stream down the street, around the corner of the inn and out of sight. Only their bugles betrayed them. Now the bugles were no longer theirs but ghostly echoes of the tuckets that

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heralded King Bela II and his Queen riding up the green valley from grim Vysehrad to their new castle of Spis.

What matter that Bela was sightless? The revengeful irons heated by Coloman's jealousy had put out his eyes and those of his father when Bela was a little lad. What matter that he had never looked upon the face of his Servian princess, Helena; never glimpsed the shining whiteness of his stronghold. The majesty and beauty rode at his side; and all his. The white castle with its prow set haughtily to the unvanquished north, his too, then and forever, waited. . . . Its gates stood wide. . . .

Ride on, Bela. . . .

In Scotia, David, king and saint, is laying the stones of the abbey of Melrose. Across the channel Norman Matilda, widowed once, marries that sturdy Angevin gentleman, Geoffrey Plantagenet, and the golden broom begins to bloom prophetically on Saxon hillsides. In Aragon, Ramiro the Monk-King is betrothing his three-year-old daughter to the Count of Barcelona; then, washing his hands of kingdoms temporal, goes back to the Abbey of Fontfroide, and his aves and paternosters. Nearer at hand, in Suabia the merchant Guelfs swell their holdings until they draw suspicious glances from German emperors and Lombard kings. Bohemund's kingdom of Jerusalem is again menaced by Islam, and Bernard, pacing his cloister at Clairveaux, feels stirring within him the urge of the Second Crusade. . . .

All this as Bela and Helena ride in at the first of those five gates; as the tuckets sound and the wooded Carpathians give back their echoes; as morning lights the white battlements of Spissky Zamok; as I look on.

Founded as a royal stronghold, Spissky Zamok continued to serve Hungary as its northern outpost against

the wild north. It formed a defence against the Mongol tide which swept across Transylvania and eastern Slovakia and Hungary in the thirteenth century, before Bela IV offered his charters to German colonists who would hold the Spis for him against future attack.

Two centuries later, Spissky Zamok became the stronghold of Jan Jiskra z Brandysa. Hunyadi Janos attacked and burned it in his campaign against Jiskra in 1444. Later it fell to the Zapolskys, who lorded it here as in Trenčín and sent their daughters to be queens of Poland and Princesses of Transylvania, and their sons to fight the Turks in St. Stephen's name. And when these daughters and sons came to die they were borne out of that castle gate with no abatement of their Magyar grandeur, down the green hill, through the village with their vassals kneeling in the dust of the street, and up to St. Martin's hill to their graves in their own chapel, where their effigies still lie gathering dust and — what one feels the Zapolskys would consider a far greater insult — obscurity.

The end of Spissky Zamok came in 1780 when it was burned in the stormy civil war that filled Joseph II's reign — that king who ordered for his own epitaph: "Here lies Joseph, a Sovereign who with the best intentions never succeeded in a single project."

The castle now lies roofless and empty. One clambers up and down broken steps and over piles of fallen stones to count the one hundred and thirty-five apartments of which the archives boast. A little green lizard suns himself along the moulding of a broken window where Helena leaned to look down on the village, and, across the gap it fills, to the cathedral and bishop's palace on the opposite hill.

Elgart Zeyer had backed his wagon into place along Pohradie's wide dusty street where the market was beginning. He spread his printed calicos and tablecloths and lace and flowered ribbons between the stall of a merchant of tinware and a booth of wooden toys and kitchen utensils. The proprietors were old acquaintances of his. They exchanged gossip of the road and trade . . . a falling off last market day in Markusovce, the arrest of Pavel Klena who had sold his wares in Poprad the week before without the required license to show the examining constable who makes the rounds while the market is in progress.

The wife of the merchant of tinware had a new baby. She sat with it in her arms on the back step of their van and exchanged maternal confidences with Mrs. Y.

Podhradie's market, that week, was enlivened by the soldiery. A company had been left behind. While the officers breakfasted in the inn's common room, the troops mingled with the country crowd, inspected the pigs and calves, joked with the poultry women, stood about Elgart Zeyer's stall to watch the pretty girls make their purchases.

I noticed, too, a number of gypsies in the crowd. Over the hills to the East lies the county of Saros which borders on Ruthenia. That is gypsyland. The girls, bold of eye and bosom, stood about the *hostinec* door. Their dark, mobile faces were a sharp contrast to the broad, fair countenances of the Spis folk. Their laughter — shrill and clicking like the sound of castanets — struck across the even swell of barter and exchange.

I said farewell to Elgart Zeyer and his sister with regret. They had already appraised Podhradie's market as a poor one for them. They planned to fold up their stall

and drive away before the official closing hour at noon. They would make Krompachy — across the Hornad valley on the edge of the Nizke Tatry, that night, and open their wares on the churchyard grass in the morning.

Spissky Zamok remains an aristocrat to the end. Aloof and disdainful, it holds its place on its high hill whose closely mowed flanks are sprinkled now with purple crocuses. The road to the East skirts the headland below the castle's prow.

But the bishop has compromised. Cottages, white-walled and red-roofed, crowd the slope to the gateway of his cathedral city. Within the walls, nearly as stout and defiant as the castle's, church and seminary and bishop's palace retain their episcopal hauteur. But the street of gracious eighteenth century houses with proud armorial bearings and dates — 1737, 1753 — over their portals and glimpses through these of inner gardens closely walled — just such houses as grace Prague's Mala Strana and certain streets in Bratislava, residences of adroit, courtly abbés and minor canons with a taste for playing the clavier — these have become dwellings for simple village folk. They spread their washing on the abbe's box bushes and encourage their goslings to swim in the baroque fountains under the noses of indignant Nereids.

Tradition tells of a chapel built on this hill in the ninth century, blessed by the saintly brothers — Cyril and Methodius. Like many another Slavic congregation, this in the Spis held to its Eastern ritual even after the Magyars had supplanted the older rule of Moravia and Magyar Stephen had received his crown from Pope Sylvester. Perhaps because of this, Helena the queen, who

was an adherent of the Eastern Orthodox faith, chose the opposite hill for the castle. The present church is fifteenth century Gothic with a perpendicular façade and two towers in which appear, unexpected and lovely, double-arched windows. Traces of an earlier Romanesque building still remain in some sturdy round arches in the apse and choir.

The bishop has taken only part of the hill top for his own. Beyond the church wall, a broad grassy plateau stretches to the west then drops abruptly to the rolling plain. From it one looks eastward to the castle with Podhradie lost in the hollow between the two mounts, and westward across the Spis to a rise of sharp-edged blue peaks — twenty-five miles away — the Tatras.

I sat on the grass and waited for the sunset. Presently, two figures came across the grass toward me — a small girl and a smaller boy. They came and stood in front of me and stared me up and down unblinkingly. "Why do you sit there?" the little girl demanded.

Before I had chance to reply a voice proceeding from one of the cottages built under the lee of the church wall cried admonishingly:

"Katya!"

A gate was opened and seven large white geese proceeded solemnly across the field in our direction.

The little girl sighed. She broke a switch from an ash tree, stripped it of its leaves, but left the cluster of scarlet fruits. She shook it hissing over the backs of the seven geese and they started down the bank and across the road to the shelter of a little copse. The goose girl looked back and called: "Janko."

But the small boy shook his head. He sat down on the grass with the finality of one who will not be moved. And he looked at me and smiled ingratiatingly.

What Katya did not know was that the ash twig had magic in it. She waved it over the geese and the red berries dangled temptingly over the leader's beak. He stretched his neck, snapped, and the scarlet cluster lay in the road. The seven geese fell upon it, each snapping and swallowing a berry. In place of seven geese Katya saw before her seven knights in glistening armor with plumed helmets.

"We are the seven heroes of the Zapolskys," they said. "A spell was laid upon us long ago and we were turned into geese. And geese we remained until we could eat the fruit of the magic ash tree."

"Quick, quick," cried the tallest knight. (Katya felt sure she recognized him as the goose who was always first to go through the gate.) He held out the remaining scarlet berry to her. "Eat this."

She put the berry between her teeth. It tasted quite delicious, something like a cross between a currant cake and a cinnamon drop. And the effect was like that of waking out of a long sleep. She was no longer Katya the goose girl but Princess Katarina Zapolsky—and the seven knights, now bowing before her in the path, her seven champions—

"But my brother. . . ." Katya said.

"See!" I called the small Janko's attention to the group on the path below us. "Your sister is waving to you. She wants you to come."

He shut his lips very tight and shook his head. "Pooh! I know all about Katya," he seemed to say. "It's you I am interested in. What are you doing here? And what do you carry in that little bag in your lap? Perhaps if I stay you will open the bag and let me see. . . ."

"He will not come," said Katya sadly. "The Strange Woman from Afar has cast a spell upon him," said the tallest knight. "Beside, the ash berries are all gone. Let us go into the wood and ask the Wise Woman who lives there what to do."

It was dark in the wood. The seven knights went ahead in single file, Katya followed after. Presently they came to a great beech tree that had a tiny door in its trunk. The tallest knight knocked on the door, the door opened, and Katya and the knights went into a little room where an old woman sat by a fire. She was little and brown and very like a twisted and gnarled bit of root herself.

The leader of the knights put the question to her. How was the young prince Janko to be freed from his enchantment?

The Wise Woman thought for a long time. Then she said: "He must weep. He must taste the salt of his own tears on his tongue. No one who has not learned to weep can be a real prince."

"Oh dear!" said Katya, "then I am afraid Janko will never be a prince. Janko never cries. Everyone says he is the best baby in the Spis."

"He must be made to cry," said the Wise Woman.

"But how?" said Katya and the seven knights together. "Perhaps the Strange Woman from Afar will do something to make him unhappy."

"No," said the Wise Woman. "She will not. She will do many things to keep him from being that. . . ."

The small boy moved his plump person across the grass close to my side. A troubled look appeared on his face. I thought he cast apprehensive glances toward the

wood where his sister and the geese had disappeared. Heavens! Was he going to cry?

"Don't! Don't cry!" I said hastily. "See, here in my purse are some copper pieces."

I counted them into his hand.

"We must use strategy," said the Wise Woman.

She and Katya and the seven knights set to pondering how this was to be done.

The sun had dropped. The jagged outline of the Tattras, five stark peaks, stood darkly against that distant glory. Along the road I had driven the night before in Elgart Zeyer's wagon came a farm cart. It drew up before a Calvary set up at the edge of the fields. A woman got out. One saw even at that distance, from the way she walked, that she was weary. The man remained in the cart while she knelt between the figures of the two Marys — Mary Mother and Mary sinner.

Toiling up the hill, dark against the sunset, came the bent figure of a peddler. His tray was filled with the usual assortment of knick-knacks and, impaled on a long spike, were a dozen sugary *kolaces*.

Janko stood up. His eye went from the peddler to the *kolaces*. He unfolded his fingers and looked at the copper coins in his hand. The connection between these needed no comment. He trotted down the path toward the peddler.

Amused, I watched him make his bargain. How carefully he weighed the greater size of one *kolace* against the greater amount of sugar frosting on another — the pedler was enjoying his part in the transaction no less. The cart was coming slowly up the hill. Out of the wood moved Katya and seven white geese.

The bargain driven and the *kolace* safely in his hand, Janko turned to ascend the path. He held the *kolace* proudly. Then, from a bush beside the path, a long white neck was lifted, a yellow beak snapped, Janko's hand was suddenly empty — the *kolace* was gone.

The first look of hurt surprise was followed by the darkness of dismay. There burst from him a wail of outrage and of loss. Tears — all the tears which he had stoically forborne to shed for tumbles or scratches — welled to his eyes, ran down his fat cheeks. From the wood Katya and six white geese came running. The seventh goose stood swallowing the last sugary crumb of *kolace* and looking decidedly pleased with itself.

Katya caught up the weeping Janko; with the seven geese forming as it were a bodyguard she bore him to the cottage by the wall.

I sat on. The sunset glory flooded the plain. Behind, on its hill, the castle remembered the rosy glow it had worn at dawn. The bells of St. Martin's began to peal. From the seminary a line of students in long black cassocks filed across the lawn and in at the church door. A group of villagers — old men, hobbling on sticks, and several bent old women, came from the lane. A cottage gate swung wide; a woman appeared carrying Janko in her arms.

But what a Janko! His head was crowned with a cap of blue with a scarlet pompon; his shirt blazed with red and black embroidery at neck and wrists. He wore a little surcoat of white homespun embroidered down the front with rows of scarlet tulips.

Gone were the tears; his rosy face wore a look of benign content. In his hand in place of the lost *kolace* was a sausage.

He held it as it might have been a sceptre.

The old people gathered round him and made little noises of admiration — Age paying its eternal homage to Youth. The peddler, now seated sociably on the church steps, told the story of the *kolace* to a delighted audience.

Then the bells rang again, with a note of warning now. Janko was borne like a prince in at St. Martin's door, and all the folk followed after. The organ began a peacen of thanksgiving.

And so I know how fairy tales are born.





CHAPTER ELEVEN

TSIGANES AND CZARDAS



HERE had been gypsies in Podhradie's market. There were more along the road, next morning, as I drove by automobile across the westernmost ridge of the wooded Carpathians from Spisska Podhradie to Prešov.

The day was Sunday; the bells in St. Martin's towers rang out across the Spis; the Slovaks dressed in their Sabbath fine linen were gathering about the church doors. Groups of ten and twenty walking together from some distant hamlet, too small to have a church of its own, passed down the road round the castle headland into the town.

Higher, as the road mounted into the real hills, were the Romany folk, free as air, untroubled as the fleecy clouds that sailed serenely over the forested heights. A few were afoot, the women stepping proudly with a swirl of pink and purple petticoats about their bare brown ankles; the men slight and wiry in close-fitting jackets of rubbed velveteen.

Others drove in high tented carts. Dark, unsmiling, aquiline faces stared at me through the rents in the



THE WHITE CASTLE OF THE SPIS LOOKS AWAY TO POLAND



THE INN AT SPIŠSKÉ PODHRADÍ



"... AND WAS BORNE IN REGALLY AT ST. MARTIN'S
DOOR"

weather-stained canvas. On the tail of one cart perched a youth with heavy-lidded, languorous eyes, and a violin tucked under his chin. He drew the bow across the strings and sang; a girl walking beside the cart watched him and listened and was lost to all else.

All the *tsiganes* we passed were travelling as I was, toward the east. Why, I was to learn later.

From the summit of the first ridge, one looked back at Spissky Zamok so white, so valiant, so like a proud clipper ship breasting a tossing green sea. Then the forests enfolded us — forests of oak and beech and chestnut, green now but soon to flame with autumnal glory. A stone shaft set up on the summit of the ridge marked the site of an engagement between the Hungarians and the Russians in 1874. Later years had added to it a new significance. My driver turned round in the seat to point, "So far came the Red Armies in 1919."

The county of Saris, which lies on the eastern slope of the first ridge of the wooded Carpathians, is another world from the Spis. Its connection with Poland has been constant. In all this region Cracow, Lemberg and Přemysl in Galicia and, to the south, Budapest and Debreczin are the centers to which man's thoughts turn naturally by force of long association. Vienna was always a foreign power with annoying habits of annexation, and Prague is an unknown city, "somewhere in Bohemia." At least another generation must be born before the people of these eastern countries of Slovakia will think Praguewards and Praguewise.

The Saris has its castle, too. It rises, a grey ruin on the summit of a conical hill that overlooks the valley of the Tarca. Its foundations were laid by the Romans during Trajan's Dacian campaign. Up this valley of the

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Tarca ran one of the Empire's trade routes to the Baltic. The salt mines of the Saris were a lure to these and to later invaders — Huns, Tartars, Magyars, Poles and Turks. The workings, lying just north of Prešov, have been flooded since 1752, but salt is still obtained from them by the evaporation of the water pumped from the mines which contains approximately twenty-five percent of salt.

Close by, at Dubnik, are once famous opal mines whose gems went to adorn the turbans of many a sultan.

We passed under the lee of the hill where stands a famous Calvary. Here, on September fourteenth, come pilgrims from the Saris, from Ruthenia and from Poland. They climb the long flight of steps that mount the hillside on their knees, stopping, along the way, to pray at each of the grottoes in which stand groups of statuary representing the Stations of the Cross. At the summit is a small chapel, too small to hold one-third of the pilgrims. The others kneel in the rough grass and on the neglected graves. They read their books of devotion and chant their long Slavic litanies while the mass proceeds. At its close the priests come to the balcony above the church door to bless the multitudes; then, led by acolytes with banners, the procession marches down the hill and along the country road into Prešov.

At the time of this pilgrimage, one may see the costume of the Saris at its best. On that Sunday morning, we met more than one woman wearing the long full skirt of crimson plush, the tight bodice of purple silk brocade sewn with sequins. On their heads were close caps of fine lace and atop these, little round hats like tambourines covered with glittering sequins. The men wore dark jackets embroidered in colored wools over their



A TSIGANE MOTHER BY THE ROAD



TSIGANES IN BARDIOV



THE OLD TURKISH PRISON — PREŠOV



WHERE CARAFFA'S "BLOODY TRIBUNAL" WAS HELD

white trousers, and around their necks long cravats of knitted wool striped in gaudy colors.

It was close on noon when we drove down the long wide street which is the main artery of Prešov, to strains of a regimental band playing gay airs in the tiny park. Groups of townfolk strolled about between the beds of marigolds and asters, others sat happily at the tables of sidewalk *kaviarnas* behind tubs and hanging baskets of flowers.

Prešov is the chief town of the Saris. Its citizens bitterly resent the fact that because it lies off the main route from Prague to Košice it has received none of the advantages that fall to the latter city. However that may be, Prešov differs from all the other towns of Slovakia in that it is gay. Flowers bloom in its parks and along its house fronts. There is a multiplicity of *drožkas*, open landaus drawn by two horses, in which the Magyar *nobles* drive about the town, the coachman standing up on his box to lash his horses into a clattering gallop. The inhabitants, too, present a marked contrast to the soldier, more phlegmatic Spis type. The men of Prešov are tall, dark, handsome; the women have an elegance seen in no other city except Košice. The Magyar strain predominates.

There is, perhaps, another strain as well. In the first half of the sixteenth century Suleiman the Magnificent pushed the boundaries of the Ottoman empire into the Carpathians. Prešov — Eperjes, to recall its better known Hungarian name — became his northern citadel.

Was it from the Saris that the Magnificent took the Slavic slave girl, Roxelana, whom he made his legal wife and for whom he built the separate, flower-like tomb

which is the Taj Mahal of the Bosphorus? Roxelana is one of the fateful women of history. For love of her, Suleiman put his son Mastapha to death, that the son of Roxelana might inherit the throne of Byzantium.

The Turks rebuilt Prešov and embellished it. Along its wide streets stand many tall, dark, old houses; their lower floors have been turned into shops, but above these rise arched and arcaded façades with deep secretive windows — houses that are reminiscent of palaces in Stamboul and Belgrade. One has the statue of a Turk with upraised scimitar rising from its cornice. The tall doors of these houses, fitted with screens of panelled wood, in which smaller openings have been cut for the traffic of every day, open into deep courtyards that are overlooked by galleries upheld by delicate, twisted columns whose capitals show traces of old glazed tiles rosy red and yellow and blue, and elegant arabesques and verses from the Koran in the beautiful Arabic alphabet. Ruined now and turned to base uses, these old palaces still retain memories of the voluptuous East.

In connection with this Turkish influence on eastern Slovakia, one is continually impressed by the prevalence of the tulip as a design in Slovak decoration. It adorns the long white coats of the peasant men; it appears in the intricate painted decorations over the hearths. The tulip was Suleiman's flower. He planted gardens of them about his palace in Constantinople and proclaimed a holiday to celebrate their blooming. It was the Fleming Ogier de Busbecq who was ambassador of the Holy Roman Empire at the court of Suleiman who brought the first tulips to Holland.

A deep archway leads out of one side of the *namesti* to the west. Its sides have been honeycombed with

shops, mere holes in the wall, like those in the bazaars at Constantinople. Here elderly, bearded Jews in high-crowned, black hats squat beside sacks that are filled with grey-blue poppy seed, and with the flaming orange-red paprika which flavors all the food of Hungary; amid garlands of onions and tall red clay jars filled with pickled cucumbers but which might, by sleight of imagination, be those very ones from which the forty thieves sprang upon Ali Baba.

And, as you pass through that crowded, malodorous passageway with its narrowly barred upper windows into the street leading away to the west, you find yourself under the mildewed wall of the old Turkish prison. It is a hideous and grim reminder of the days when the Crescent floated from Prešov's gates, when the Ottoman Empire menaced the peace of all Europe, and Don John of Austria,

“ Lovelight of Spain, hurrah!
Deathlight of Africa! ”

sounded the call to the last crusade.

Suleiman's prisons did not cease their grim work with the crumbling of Suleiman's power. The Saris was a battleground for two centuries while Hungary fought her losing fight against the increasing power of Austria.

During the Thököly rebellion in 1687, thousands of persons were thrown into the prisons of eastern Slovakia and a tribunal was instituted at Prešov for their trial. It was presided over by Count Caraffa, a man of cruel, covetous and sanguinary nature. He caused a scaffold to be set up in Prešov's market place and there he tortured his unhappy victims to make them confess their guilt of conspiracy against the emperor.

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It was a reign of terror. Men of the first eminence in the country were seized, their right hands cut off and then they were beheaded. Their bodies were quartered and hung upon gibbets over Prešov's gates. Many died in the foul prison from the effects of torture. The town became a shambles until the Palatine Esterhazy remonstrated with Leopold. The Emperor was persuaded to recall Caraffa, but by the same messenger he sent him the order of the Golden Fleece.

A statue of the tyrant stands on the corner of a house on the *namesti* where the Bloody Tribunal was held. The count surveys the market square with proud contempt. Behind him, his ally, Death, raises a terrible drawn sword.

One reads the whole tale of Austro-Hungarian rule in Slovakia in that monument designed to honor not the sufferers but the tyrant, and its implication that so the Hapsburg will deal with all who defy his authority.

Prešov's hotel did not invite one to linger. There was a smell — an ancient and venerable odor, doubtless of Turkish begetting. It rose from the courtyard round which the hostelry was built and it drifted through the long corridors with their grimy, fly-specked mirrors — the sort of mirror that the least ill-favored of woman-kind passes by with head averted, unwilling to meet the reflection they give back to her — their tattered lace draperies looped from tarnished gilt cornices, their portraits of uniformed Austrian Archdukes and Hungarian generals, with lithographs of Masaryk and General Stefanik and "President Dr. Wilson" added hastily for political good measure, to the uppermost bedchamber.

For the night Prešov offered no second choice of hotels

and I had a mind to see the Monday morning market scene. For that afternoon — I turned the pages of the railroad guide and decided on Bardiov. This old trading town lies twenty miles to the north of Prešov, higher in the Wooded Carpathians and close to the Polish frontier. The Russians occupied it for eight days in 1915.

German settlers, some of those no doubt who followed the rat catcher's piping, settled Bardiov in the twelfth century. The town lay on the trade route into Galicia and prospered accordingly. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries it was renowned as an educational center.

Those early founders built, according to German pattern, a square market place with a Town Hall rising in its centre, a magnificent, ruddy brown stone building with a high steep roof and proud gables from which an angel and two armored knights with a host of grotesque Gothic monsters look down. It has, too, a rich outer stairway built in 1641 and leading to an upper bay adorned with the arms of ancient burgomasters that still show traces of crimson, azure and gold. They built a church which they dedicated to that learned St. Aegidius in whose honor the Nurembergers raised one of their shrines. Its fine thirteenth century square tower is capped by a tall, dark, slate steeple and a covered gallery for the sentinels who watched the fateful passes into Poland.

Here in 1539 came John Zapolya, *voivode* of Transylvania and elected King of Hungary, to meet his bride, the Polish Princess Isabella. They were married in St. Aegidius's Church attended by the barbaric splendor of the assembled princes of Croatia, Roumania, Poland and Magyardom.

Architecturally, *svaty Egida* is the most satisfying of

all the cathedrals of Slovakia. It is simple and severe, even stern with that uplifted warning steeple, but it has too surprising elegancies of carved stone balustrades and delicate mouldings, and within, richly carved oak choir stalls and an altar of carved and gilded wood with many statues and painted wooden panels that is one of the most noteworthy treasures of fifteenth century art of the Nuremberg School. The two carved dogs — can they be meant for lions? — which guard the portals of the Town Hall, appear again in the church carvings and ornament the ends of the pews down the aisle.

Over one of the side altars is a small round painting of the Head of Jesus, which is reputed to have come from Dürer's brush. The countenance is that which the Nuremberg master painted many times — a slender oval, dead white, with the scarlet lips showing like a wound, and the long curls and fine beard of ruddy gold. A Dürer? Perhaps. But seen here in Bardiov that Face takes on new and poignant significance, so like is it to the faces of the Polish Jews one meets in Bardiov's streets. During the persecution in Galicia, thousands of Jews crossed the Carpathians to find refuge in the cities of northern Slovakia. The Hungarians welcomed them, preferring that trade should be in their hands rather than in the hands of the Slovaks.

With the gradual draft of Germans and Slovaks to the industrial centers, the Jews have taken Bardiov. They represent more than two-thirds of the population. The more prosperous occupy the strong stone houses on the market place that were once palaces of the merchant princes who built the town. Others have burrowed like rabbits in the broken city walls. Their shapeless, black-clad women, victims of a terrible fecundity, their pallid,

black-clad children squat on the door steps while the long black gabardined figures of the older men pace the market square on west and south and east. Never on the north. On that side rises *svaty Egida*, deserted but undaunted, and never conquered. The Rathhaus angel, born Gabriel, has become Azrael, but Aegidius of the Schoolmen is of sterner stuff. They cast dark glances at the clock on the saint's tower. Will those hands never move? Today is the first day of the week, the Sabbath is over; fingers itch for the feel of coin. Yet they must wait, wait one whole long idle day while a mere handful of the Golem keep their Sunday. Grrh —

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But that Sunday in Bardiov belonged to the *tsiganes*. The carts we had passed, that morning on the hill road, had arrived before me. The beasts were turned out to graze in a field beyond the town walls and the gypsy owners gathered in the settlement of sod huts which houses Bardiov's *tsiganes*.

The occasion, I learned, was a wedding and the three days of festivity attendant upon its celebration. On a bench against the wall of one of the houses sat the bride and groom, the girl a vivid figure in green and cerise calico, her black braids a-flutter with many ribbons. Both were young, not more than seventeen, and with the dark hauteur which is the birthright of Romany. They sat silent and unembarrassed, king and queen of the feast, while a hundred or more of their kinsfolk gathered, in groups of five and six about tiny fires, preparing the early evening meal. That evening, as I waited in the dusk for the train back to Prešov, I could hear the

scrape of violins, hear the stamp of feet on the hard-packed earth that was the dancing floor.

Every town of Slovakia has its gypsy colony. The *tsigane* is not a nomad. He lives on the fringes of civilization, aware of it, but taking no part in it. He loiters on the edge of every market crowd with the perennial curiosity of Romany. He is like the cat who warms herself by your fire, laps your cream, stretches on your rug — but who acknowledges no master, keeps no loyalty, is bound by no ties.

The *tsiganes* made their first appearance in Hungary from the Orient early in the fifteenth century. King Sigismund, he who was the father of Hunyadi Janos and the persecutor of Hus, granted them certain defined rights and bestowed the rank of Voivode upon their leader Ladislaus. The *tsiganes* were divided into four castes — the robots or serfs, the bear leaders, the spoon-makers and the gold washers. These ancient divisions still exist to some extent. A family of Romanis with a small brown bear in lead is a familiar sight at the big fairs and religious gatherings where the beast's few clumsy tricks quickly draw a crowd of staring Slovaks and a handful of coppers. The chief settlement of the gold washers is at Komarno, at the junction of the two arms of the Danube. By ancient royal privilege these *tsiganes* were permitted to wash the river sands which yield a small percent of gold, and to sell their pannings to the mint of Hungary. It is from Komarno and the villages in the Danube basin that the gypsies come to Pieštany to exploit the tourists there.

Throughout Hungary and the Balkans, the words *tsigane* and musician are practically synonymous. In the sixteenth century the gypsy fiddler, Dominic Kal-

man, was leader of that famous choir of Matus Corvinus which the Pope envied. Another *tsigane* from Bratislava, Sigismund Cousser, was choirmaster of St. Patrick's in Dublin in the time of Dean Swift. Today, in the *tsigane* orchestras which make music in all the larger coffee houses of Slovakia, Hungary, Roumania and Jugoslavia, one may hear artists like Racz Laczi, Berkes Bela, Sarai Elemer, and others whose playing is known to lovers of gypsy music all over the world through their gramophone records. When Bela Radicz, "king of gypsy musicians," died a year ago, two hundred *tsigane* musicians gathered in Budapest to play round his bier.

The musical genius of the gypsy has always found its truest expression in those countries like the Balkans, Hungary and Spain where the imprint of the East has been most strongly felt. It was in Andalusia that I became aware of the fascination of gypsy music.

The Spanish gypsy sings his *coplas*, verses of four short lines, to the music of the guitar. That instrument, which westerners have derogated to an accompaniment for sentimental maidens, in the hands of a Segovia or a Montoya becomes touched with divine fire. The instrument of the *tsigane* is the violin. That light, most responsive, most companionable of instruments which can be stowed in a pack, a pocket or even into the leg of a high boot, is the prized possession of every gypsy lad. Often enough it is his sole possession. And it suffices. In Košice, a famous gypsy center, the Czechoslovak government has built a school especially for the children of the *tsiganes*. At the back of a classroom, hung from a row of hooks, I counted fourteen violins.

For inspiration, the *tsigane* needs an audience. He is not one to pour out his soul in loneliness to the moon.

Liszt, who wrote a book on *tsigane* music and always acknowledged his own debt to the Romanis, remarked that the genius of the gypsy is roused to its heights by an audience more cultivated than himself.

Given such an audience — and one person of sympathetic ear suffices — the *tsigane* will take the theme of a Slovak folksong, will dwell on it, turn it, twist it, wring from it its utmost of sorrow and longing and regret; will desert it for another, toy with that, return to the first, bringing the two together, holding them up to you as it were, saying: "Look! Hear this! And this! How it echoes! How it contradicts. . . ." Then, swift as a swallow's dart, he will turn into the wild madness of the Magyar czardas, that dance measure which has in it all the ferocity and the barbaric passion of the sons of Attila.

In all these orchestras, which are comprised of violin, cello, and cembalom — in Serbia there is usually a goosla — the violin is the solo instrument. "The rest merely intensify its shadows and illumine its joys. Each musician sustains the motif, reinforcing its sonorities, accentuating its rhythms, seizing the thought of the solo virtuoso on the bound as it falls from starry heights."¹

For music such as this there can be no notes. What good were notes? The players could not read them if they had them. Cembalom and cello wait on violin; the violin on the mood of Romany. . . .

The *tsiganes* of Košice have their own market. It is held on Thursdays in a square adjacent to that which is filled by the regular weekly market of the town. There gypsy tinkers squat over piles of old iron; gypsy basket makers spread their wares and stand by, aloof and dis-

¹ Liszt.

dainful. They make no effort to sell, to cajole you into buying. That is your affair. And as in other gypsy markets, in other lands, there are heaps of strangely assorted objects — old glass and bits of velvet and tarnished tinsel, a broken brooch and a tortoise shell comb, a marquetry cabinet, half a dozen thin silver spoons. One does not inquire too closely into the source from which these have come.

Not alone for the *tsiganes* is Košice's market one of the most picturesque in Slovakia. To it come the herds-men from the mountain *zupa* of Novohrad, the men wearing their four long pigtailed that tell of the Tartar blood that is mixed with their Slav inheritance. The region south of Košice is rich farming land. On the slopes of Kopacs Teto (Bald Tip), where King Charles had his final victory over Čak Matus, grow the famed vineyards which yield the sweet white wine of Tokaj. The finest of this has always come from Košice. King Louis the Great planted the vineyards in 1342. Cartloads of the fragrant grapes, with the small yellow melons, come into Košice's market.

I never tired of studying the peasant types seen on market days.

Košice is Slovakia's second city — the sixth in size in the Republic. Its location at the eastern end of the country gives it a strategic importance. Before the war it was a Hungarian provincial town which had, however, a famous theatre, the oldest state theatre of the Magyars, from which came many a star to blaze in Budapest and Vienna. Košice's theatre is still the city's pride. Six performances are given in the week — three in Magyar, three in Slovak. I saw there an excellent pro-

duction of Chekov's "Cherry Orchard." When one thinks of the struggles of the "Little Theatre" movement in America, one is the more impressed by this city of less than fifty-five thousand inhabitants which maintains its repertory theatre, in addition to several *kinos*.

The Angevin kings of Hungary favored Košice. Elizabeth, mother of King Louis, began the great cathedral which is dedicated to her name saint. She brought French architects to plan it, not to be outdone by Emperor Charles of Bohemia, then building his church of St. Vitus on the Hradčany.

The church is rich fourteenth century Gothic with fine portals. An older church, dedicated to St. Michael, stands close beside it. There King Charles celebrated the defeat of Čak Matus of Trenčín.

Svaty Alzbeta, alone of all the great churches of Czechoslovakia, approaches the ideal of the Latin cathedrals. It is alive. The varied and colorful life of the street pours in at its doors with their rows of apostles and kings who have worn Stephen's crown. From the north door the saintly and royal Elizabeth drops her miraculous roses. Above, quaint carvings of the fourteenth century celebrate the good deeds of this princess of the Magyars: scrubbing the poor, who seem anything but pleased by the saintly lady's ministrations; and stuffing a very large sausage into the mouth of a beggar.

It is, too, a famous place for weddings. In the four days I spent in Košice I saw no fewer than seven brides drive up to Svaty Alzbeta's door in their open landaus, wreathed in smilax and white asters. Immediately a crowd gathered from the shops and street; market women left their stalls; bakers' boys with baskets of dough, servants out with baskets to do the family shop-

ping, artisans and the invariable quota of very old men and women who spend their days on church steps, pressed up the aisle to the chancel to miss no word, no glimpse of the romance.

I am sitting at one of the tables before the Hotel Schalkov. An American man and his wife — doubtless they have wandered here from Budapest, sit at an adjoining table. With the exception of Mrs. Y—— and one American woman encountered in the hotel at Strbske Pleso, these are the first compatriots I have seen since leaving Banska Bystrica. I catch them eyeing me over the top of the three-year-old Punch, which the head waiter brings out with ceremony for all guests who look as though they were of Anglo-Saxon derivation.

The man makes occasion to speak to me: "Has this town anything worth seeing?"

The coffee house tables are set out on the sidewalk. Between them passes and repasses the street crowd — townsfolk and market women in lace kerchiefs, scarlet bodices and very full purple skirts over the clumping, high, black leather boots; country men in white homespun, braided boldly in black; Jews in trailing gabardines; gypsies; soldiers; an ice-cream pedler in a scarlet fez and flapping, heelless scarlet slippers.

"I like art," says his wife. "I go to all the lectures our Woman's Club gives. I guess I didn't miss a gallery in Italy. The primitive, you know. . . ."

There is a museum in Košice with a fine collection of Slovak painted furniture and pottery and laces. And in the garden behind the museum they have set up one of the old wooden churches with shingled domes and painted icons such as may be found in the *zupa* of

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Zemplin where many of the people are adherents of the Greek Catholic Church.

"Give me scenery," says the man. "The Alps . . ."

"The Tatras," I am about to say. And don't. Can I tell them of the Lord of Time and his twelve sons? Of Lomničky Pleso and the plank that floats there waiting for the Day of Judgment? The wife would correct me that Noah landed upon Ararat which is somewhere in Syria. And doubtless her Woman's Club can furnish the exact date when the last waters of the Flood evaporated.

"Nothing," I say firmly.

That evening the Schalkov bristles with uniforms — Czech and French. The halls blaze with campaign ribbons. Marshall Petain and his staff are making a tour of the Republic attended by a military delegation from Prague. I have met the thin, grey, old soldier in his rather faded horizon blue in the lift.

"*Mon marechal!*"

"*Madame!*"

And I have a bow to place in my gallery of famous encounters.

The Marshal and his staff, the mayor and resident military of Košice dine in state in the main restaurant. We, who are mere civilians, are banished for this evening to a humbler dining-room. A jazz band has been imported to entertain the Marshal. The *tsigane* orchestra is ours.

The cembalom player bends over his keys, his little padded hammers fly: "There's a White House on the Vah," "Velehrad, Velehrad," sobs the cello, lamenting that greatness now lost to all but song. Out of that tide

of song flows the pattern that is Slovakia, warm and rich and dark; a pattern as intricate, as moving as the design Katarina Brenzova has painted above her hearth. There rise the gaunt peaks of the Tatras, lonely and remote; the stretches of dark forest, secretive, tenacious, holding fast its memories of pagan rites; the romantic *dolinas* Puchov and Demanova; the broad wheatlands, golden in stubble where Janko and his Anička dance under the harvest crown. A wicker cart drives along a lane, stops and a woman descends to bind a garland of rye straw, stuck with blood red poppies, about the feet of a painted tin Christ; the *tsigane* girls appear out of the summer dusk and bargain with Elgert Zeyer for cherry-colored ribbons. Petr Ružicka in his long white garment of humility pulls his ferry over the Vah to Skalka; from the rock of Orava the spirit of that old eagle, Juraj Thurzo, looks down on the rafts moving with the flood; the rock walls of the Dunajec echo the saga of Čak Matus, of Thököly, the Lament for brave Francis Rakoczy and the war songs of Hunyadi's men who stormed Belgrade.

The two Americans stop at my table to inform me that they have a compartment in the night express to Prague. "This is a dead town. May as well move on."

I agree that they may.

"What about you?" they ask.

The violinist has been watching us. Now he comes down the lane between the tables to stand before us. He draws his bow. The sweet urgent tide of that melody wraps us round.

"I? Oh, come back a month from today and perhaps I can tell you."



BARDIOV'S CHURCH AND TOWN HALL — THIRTEENTH
CENTURY



ONE OF THE OLD WOODEN RUSSIAN CHURCHES IN THE
ZUPA OF ZEMPLIN



MARKET TYPES IN PREŠOV AND KOŠICE

PART IV

UNDER THE CARPATHIANS

“Tell me that the moon is cheese; but
tell me not that you have eaten of it.”

— Ruthenian saying.

CHAPTER ONE

UŽHOROD



DUST — dense, blinding, suffocating, that rolled in a cloud along the uneven road. In the midst of the dust, the gallop of horses' hoofs and an ancient yellow *drožka* swaying on its crazy springs. A man standing up on the box cracking a long snake whip in those dust clouds — lightning in the storm — and in the *drožka* — me.

Somewhere behind that curtain of all-effacing dust lay Užhorod, "Castle-town-on-the-Uz," and the capital of Ruthenia.

The express from Košice had put me down at the station which lies a mile and a half from the city itself. There half a dozen Jehus in high boots of ruddy Russian leather, and long coats of shaggy, white skins had contested fiercely for possession of me and my luggage. (I could not count this for honor; but simply because I was the only arrival in Užhorod that day.) The winner stowed me in his *drožka*, lashed the pair of rawboned horses into a gallop; and at once station, receding train,

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the wide, shadeless plain round about, all were lost in the enshrouding dust. Only the thunder of hoofs behind us told that the five disappointed charioteers were following in a clattering cavalcade.

The figure on the box turned from the waist to put a question to me: "The lady has business in Užhorod?"

I pressed my handkerchief tighter over my nose and mouth to keep from being suffocated by that dust with its freight of unnamed, Ruthenian germs. Could I with any degree of truthfulness say, "Pleasure"?

"The lady has friends in Užhorod?"

"No friends."

For Slovakia — friendly, gentle, romantic Slovakia — lay behind. A long spur of the Carpathians reaching down and into Hungary shut it away from me. The eighty miles I had come from Košice had brought me over a flat, dry plain from which the heat waves rose in a dancing shimmer. Barren, conical hills rose out of that plain — the mounds made by a giant's child long ago.

"The lady has come to see Užhorod?"

"Yes."

"Ah!" There was satisfaction in the snap of the long whip.

"The lady will see. We Ruthenes are proud of Užhorod. Such a city."

I had reached the last of the five states salvaged from the old Austro-Hungarian empire which bewildered diplomats at Versailles comprised into the Republic of Czechoslovakia: Bohemia, Moravia, Austrian Silesia, Slovakia and Pod-Karpatské Rus, meaning "Russia-under-the-Carpathians." This is the name given to the narrow strip of land between the ridge of the Carpa-

thians and the Tisza, only thirty miles wide at its eastern end, where it touches the Ukraine, and scarcely three times that in width, where it adjoins Slovakia just east of Košice.

The Ruthenes are of Russian origin. Long centuries ago they moved over the crest of the Carpathians and settled on the southern slopes. They are foresters, potters, small farmers and herdsmen. Greek and Roman merchants used to travel up into these hills to buy the long-horned, white cattle and the long-haired swine which the Ruthenian farmer still raises. The plain, stretching from the base of the mountains to the Tisza, raises corn; the forested hills yield beech, oak, chestnut and pine.

This region was of little interest to the Magyars who were a people of the plains, except as it gave them a strong northern frontier. These, possessing Pod-Karpatské Rus politically, since the tenth century, left it alone and in very much the same state of primitiveness as when they first conquered it.

Ruthenia was the fatherless baby left on the doorstep of the Peace Conference. No one knew quite what to do with her. Racially, she belonged with the Ukraine; but Poland, while accepting responsibility for that province of old Russia, refused to come south of the crest of the Carpathians. Roumania claimed the Tisza as her northern boundary. The Ruthenes, devoted adherents of the Greek Catholic Church, had only one fear as dominant as their dread of falling again under Magyar rule — a fear of Soviet Russia.

In the end she was told off to Czechoslovakia. A rather doubtful good for the new and struggling republic.

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To that clatter of hoofs was added now another sound — a terrific buzzing as of an army of giant cicadas. The driver enlightened me. "The saw mills by the river."

Then the dust cloud parted, the horses' hoofs rang on cobble stones. Low, white houses ranged themselves along a street; the street became a bridge spanning a wide reach of mud through which a trickle of water wound sluggishly.

The driver snapped his whip like a showman: "The Uz."

The Uz comes down out of the Carpathians, floating the logs in the spring. Then it takes on the semblance of a real water-way. Now in September, its low mud banks provided a wallowing place for the long-horned white bullocks, for the swine and for the children of Užhorod.

The bridge is to Ruthenia's capital what the *Karlův most* is to Prague. All day, that way is crowded with a press of bullock carts loaded with corn, with other bullocks "snaking" the long pine trees to the mills; with red-ringleted, fur-hatted Jew merchants, and black-bearded, long-skirted, high-turbaned Greek Catholic priests from the seminary on the hill; with herdsmen in long, shaggy coats of skins driving their swine to market; with potters and goose girls and vendors of grapes and melons and sunflower seeds. The last are a household necessity among the Ruthenes. The oil pressed from them is used in place of butter on the many fast days of the Greek Catholic Church. The seeds themselves are eaten as sweetmeats. Everyone in that crowd eats

grapes. Everyone nibbles sunflower seeds and spits the husks indiscriminately.

The air is raucous with cries, with the shouts of bullock drivers contending for place on the bridge (four bullocks, each with horns that measure a yard and a half from tip to tip, are a tight fit on that causeway) ; with the clang of the bells from the seminary and cathedral on the hill against which one end of the bridge abuts.

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When I announced to the powers in Prague that I intended travelling in Pod-Karpatské Rus, I had been met with shakes of the head and smiles of dubiety. Pressed for information, no one seemed to know anything definite about travel there. Pressed for advice, they agreed on two essentials — flea powder and a bag of provisions to eke out the fare of Ruthenian inns.

Arrived in Užhorod, the flea powder proved an immediate necessity. At the Hotel Koruna, which is Užhorod's best as it is its only hotel, two curly-haired pigs rose from their noon-day doze on the doorstep. They snuffled amicably about my ankles while the proprietor inspected my passport, satisfied himself that I was not a Magyar spy, and accepting me, chalked up my name on the blackboard by the door that serves the Koruna as a register.

Tourists are rare enough in Užhorod to be something of a sensation. As I followed the stout-armed servant maid, who shouldered my baggage up the stairs, I saw that a small crowd had gathered from the street and hotel yard to read my name and credentials and the letters U.S.A. on the blackboard. The portress, having deposited me and mine in a long, narrow bed-

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chamber whose one window gave on the square before the bridge, lingered to satisfy her own curiosity. . . . Was I English or American? Where had I come from? Where was I going? Was I selling anything? Were my people Ruthenes? Slovaks? Czechs then? . . . Was I a Jew, a Catholic, a Greek Catholic, or "a freethinker like the Czechs?" Did I know the American gentleman and his wife and the little boy — such a darling little boy — who had come to the Koruna, that spring? What did I carry in the small black *gepäck* which was so heavy? Was my hair bobbed? Why not? Did not all American women have bobbed hair? (Most of the "modern" Czech women cut their hair just above the tops of their ears. It is a style that is singularly devoid of charm. Added to this their desire for emancipation leads them to shave their necks. . . . I was often asked why my hair was not cut short. The reply that having tried both styles of hair dressing, I found longer hair more becoming was received with noticeable lack of faith).

Often, while travelling in out-of-the-way places, I have wished for the gift of art in my fingers. The artist is accepted anywhere, especially in Europe where he is a more familiar figure than in America. A sketch book, a stool, a box of colors are sufficient to make him or her, regardless of nationality, a figure of no more than passing remark. All idiosyncrasies of speech, dress or manner are covered by the magic cloak of art. That is because in Europe the artist is most often the son of the people. He lives nearer to them than to the bourgeoisie. The bourgeois dismisses him with a shrug; the peasant accepts him as one of his own; and the European aristo-

crat has an aristocracy of mind as well as of birth and breeding which gives him an attitude toward the artist in which there is neither condescension nor fawning. The artist is the one person outside the *Almanach de Gotha* with whom the aristocrat has a sense of equality; recognizing that his art gives him a patent of nobility in another peerage; makes him a householder in a city not made with hands. Between the two there is neither rivalry nor question of precedence.

But alas, a typewriter will not pass as part of art's paraphernalia. To the Czechs with their overweening reverence for paper and printers' ink, the writer is a person of consequence. Among other peoples, he is regarded with varying shades of suspicion. Everyone knows that artists trouble nobody. They go about and paint corners of courtyards, market scenes, a composition of crumbling house wall, church and tower gate. They sketch "types." And these sketches dispersed among the world's ateliers, have no political consequences. But books . . . newspaper articles . . . even occasionally poems. . . . These are the stuff of which revolutions are made. Immediately up go the defences. What is that writing man, worse, that writing woman, going to say about us? What did he — she — come here for, anyway?

Probably this discrimination in favor of the artist against the writer may be traced to the fact that journalism is so often the politician's left hand. The traveller who has a pen up his sleeve and a typewriter waiting round the corner quickly learns to keep these out of sight; to give evasive answers to questions as to his reason for being where he is, to pretend to be anything, even

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a seller of something, rather than "a chiel amang us takin' notes."

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Užhorod baked and steamed under the afternoon sun. The white walls gave out a blinding glare. There was not a square inch of shade to be found anywhere. The Koruna's courtyard was filled with workmen doing something to the drains, and with the pigs who lay on their sides and snored contentedly. In my room the heat reflected from the square was intense. The flea powder, which I had scattered about my room was having the effect of rousing all the *hmyze* who had their habitation there to a hysterical excitement which I hoped would lead to their deaths. I scattered more powder and went out to see the town.

The larger half huddles between the hill and the river. The Czechs are putting up business buildings five and six stories high, are paving streets and instituting a sewer. Užhorod, a city of twenty thousand persons which up to two years ago never had a resident plumber, suffers these innovations with varying degrees of fortitude. The Roumanian rug seller who squatted in his den opposite the hotel — he had spread his rugs on the outside wall where they glowed with oriental splendor — spoke with ill-concealed bitterness: "The Hungarians are a great people. Look at Budapest. Have the Czechs a city to compare with it? Yet *they* did not trouble us!"

And his neighbor, the fruit dealer whose doorway was framed in two giant sunflowers — stalks, leaves and blossoms, eight feet high — agreed gloomily: "This freedom, what is it?"

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Ruthenia has the curse of tongues. Ruthenian in its three dialects, Slovak, Magyar, German, Roumanian and Yiddish are heard on every street corner. Public signs are in three languages, at least. In an afternoon's stroll one learns as many tongues in as many alphabets simultaneously. The Cyrillac alphabet used by the Ruthenians, as by the Russians, adds a note of decoration to the shop fronts. I spent fifteen minutes and nearly wore out my pocket dictionary before I resolved the algebraic formula XYCT into Hust, one of the four towns of the state with a population of ten thousand or more.

In addition to her linguistic minorities, Ruthenia has a majority of illiterates. For them pictorial explanations are added to the signs on the shops. The tailor announces himself by Brobad coats and trousers sketched in black on his house front. Makers of ecclesiastical vestments — and surely no other town has so many of these — announce that they supply Jewish, Greek Catholic, Roman Catholic or Evangelical patrons by pictures of the garments appropriate to the ritual of each group. Furniture is advertised, kitchen utensils, tools, carts, food, sausages and farming implements, all with a directness which makes Užhorod's streets a picture gallery.

On the wall of the *hostinec*, opposite my window at the Koruna, appears a table with two Ruthenes in long coats seated at it over a smoking dish. Above their heads in space appear a foaming flagon of beer, three coily entwined sausages, a loaf of bread and a knife. Below appear a horse's head and some ears of corn.

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Need one be told that The Inn of the Two Brothers offers refreshment for man and beast?

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The hill behind the town was once the site of a castle famous in early Ruthenian history. Now only the moat and some broken ramparts remain of its defences. It was the home of Kunimund, king of the Gepidae, a Gothic tribe which held the Carpathians in the sixth century. The Lombard chief, Alboin, attacked the castle and killed its owner. He made a drinking goblet of his enemy's skull from which he demanded that Kunimund's daughter, Rosamund whom he had taken to wife, should drink to his further successes. Rosamund was, it seems, a lady of resources. She inspired one of Alboin's captains to murder him as he slept, then she and the captain fled and returned to Užhorod, where they lived and ruled happily for many years.

Some broken reaches of wall, eight feet thick, and a stout stone moat remain of Rosamund's citadel. The site is used now for a Greek Catholic seminary. Grave-faced students in long robes and graver, bearded priests climb the hill.

When the Ruthenes came over the Carpathians from Russia they brought with them their Eastern Orthodox forms of worship. Some three hundred years ago, chiefly for political reasons, these and similar congregations in Poland and what is now Roumania allied themselves with the Church of Rome. They acknowledged the supremacy of the Pope and the double procession of the Holy Spirit—the two points on which eastern and western Catholicism split. In all other things they hold to their ancient eastern dogma and rites. No statues are

permitted in the churches; only the richly painted *ikons*; the liturgy is in Greek; marriage is permitted to the lower clergy and the laity receive the communion in two kinds — that right which was the battle cry of the Husites who claimed that all the Slavs had received Christianity from the Eastern Orthodox Church not from Rome.

The Uniate Church, as it is sometimes called, adheres to the Greek calendar which fixes its feasts and fasts fourteen days later than those of the Roman church. Ruthenia, with its high proportion of Jew, lives not by two but by three calendars, and seems to be perpetually engaged in some sort of religious celebration.

The most popular festival in Ruthenia is the Feast of St. Nicholas on the sixth of December. Then, according to legend, the saint comes to earth by way of a golden cord. He is attended by an angel bearing gifts for good children, and a black and ferocious demon, the *čert*, who falls upon sinners and beats them with the bundle of birch rods he carries. Impersonators of these three personages appear in the streets of the towns where there is usually a fair. The same figures, made of frosted gingerbread, are sold at the stalls, and little statues carved from wood form toys for the children. Companies of travelling players act dramas based on the saint's life and the miracles wrought by him. The ballad singers, blind old men who wander the roads from village to village and sit outside the church gate on Sundays to beg, and in hope of being asked to a wedding, or a christening, where they entertain the guests with the interminable rhymed legends of saints and mythical heros, are then in their element and draw crowds.

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The Czech government fosters these expressions of the Ruthenes' national spirit as one way of freeing them from the bondage imposed by the Magyars. Part of the government's program in Ruthenia consists in subsidizing three travelling companies of marionettes who perform in the villages.

A feature of Ruthenia are the wooden churches with the three shingled domes that are symbolic of the Trinity, and their triple crosses, the lowest bar set aslant, "one end in heaven and one in hell," as the saying goes. There is a famous one at Užok, a lumber settlement in the hills north of Užhorod. The region was a strategic battle ground during the Great War. One may still look down on the lines of Austria's trenches, and artillery emplacements.

All these churches are very small; on Sundays when the people gather from distant hamlets they are so crowded that the Eastern custom of standing throughout the service is the only mode of worship that is possible. Many, like the one which has been set up in the garden of the museum in Košice, have interesting paintings on wood that flame with blue and crimson and gold.

On a rocky ledge east of Užhorod is an ancient stone rotunda which dates from the ninth century, or earlier, and is reputed locally to be the scene of the preaching of Cyril and Methodius before they reached Velehrad in Moravia where Svatopluk had his seat of empire.

The chapel has five deep bays, commemorative of the Five Wounds of Christ. Each of these has a narrow window that is fitted with a screen of wrought iron, formed like a sheaf of lilies. The frescoes on the rotunda's walls are wonderfully preserved. These represent

scenes of the Crucifixion. They seemed to my eyes more Gothic than Slav, and not unlike those which appear in old chapels in Ravenna and other Lombard towns of the Goths. This chapel may well have been one of those built by the Goths who had their empire north of the Danube and moved from here to northern Italy under Theodoric.

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I had hoped for an orchestra of Ruthenian *tsiganes* with my dinner in the garden behind the Koruna. But I was disappointed. On a covered platform at the end of the garden, which was that by courtesy only, being in fact a space of hard-packed earth in which grew some plane trees whose low branches made a perfect green tabernacle a few feet above our heads — was a jazz-band. A tinny piano — alas for the *tsiganes'* cembalom! — a cornet and a saxophone. The cornetist doubled in cymbals and the musical saw. Occasionally, too, he deserted all of these to thump the bass drum which was set up on the edge of the platform with its flat side to the diners. Painted on its tightly stretched skin was the legend:

THE FOUR JOLLY BOYS

How had that instrument found its way there? And what had become of the "Four Jolly Boys" it celebrated? There were but three on the platform; and these had no word of English between them.

There was a story behind that drum, one felt sure. A story I would have given much to know.

The head waiter appeared, obsequious and bowing. He asked in German, "The lady is an Englishwoman?"

[The readiness of people who live in places off the

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beaten track of travel, to accept the stranger as English is a tribute to that race's travelling capacities. How very few corners of the earth there are where you will not come across the travelling Englishman, who is so often an Englishwoman, moving unconcernedly in the midst of the crowd, making his clipped, monosyllabic comments, drinking his tea and smoking his cigarettes, and managing with his nation's singular aptitude for this, to extract comfort and entertainment out of living conditions that the average American, who is so many generations closer to the pioneer, withdraws from in horror.

I corrected the *ober* as to my nationality and he received the news with an "*Aie!*" of surprise. He turned and announced in Slovak and in tones that rang to the last wilted bush in the garden: "It is an American *panička*."

A little ripple of excitement greeted this announcement. "We like Americans better than we like the English," the *ober* said reassuringly. "Is the gracious one American born?"

Always that question. The idea seems prevalent among the uneducated classes of Central Europe that all Americans are of one generation only; all the children of recent immigrants.

The facts of my birth and ancestry are retailed to the diners who put down their knives to hear. The "jazz-band" pauses in its blaring and leans across its instruments the better to listen. The catechism continues: "When will you return to America? How long will you stay in Užhorod? Where do you go from here? Do you depart by train or the motor bus?"

When I pay my reckoning and leave the garden it is



RUTHENES PLOUGHING



JEWS IN SABLE HATS WALK SOLEMNLY



WHERE HELENA ZRINYI DEFIED CARAFFA



A HOUSE IN VOLOVE

with the conviction that a goodly proportion of the people of Užhorod intend to see me off on the five o'clock bus to Mukačevo next morning.

And they do!

The journey to Mukačevo, a distance of some ten miles, was accomplished with but one incident, the killing of a cow. The dust that the motor bus stirred up, mingling with that which rose from the hoofs of a drove of cattle being driven along the road, prevented the chauffeur from seeing more than a foot ahead of his front wheels. As he drove steadily at thirty-five miles an hour, let come what would, the accident was inevitable.

All the bus passengers but myself descended to convince the irate and loudly protesting cattle drover of this. The drover argued and shook his fists; the chauffeur argued still more loudly, moving his face close up to the drover's and holding him fast by the front of his coat. The passengers joined in vociferous chorus.

The dust rolled away and showed a wayside *hostinec* with a long pole slanting across the road above the door and sprouting a green bush at the tip. Drover, chauffeur and passengers moved forward as one man and disappeared within the *hostinec*. The uninjured cattle strayed from the road into the corn fields on either side, where they began to eat the sunflowers that grew, according to Ruthenian custom, like a hedge around the corn. I sat alone in the bus beside the dead cow.

After twenty minutes or so, the group detached itself from the *hostinec*. The drover and the chauffeur had their arms about each other's necks. The others made approving Greek chorus. They moved the dead cow out of the way, left the drover to herd his other charges, and,

with an exchange of shouted good wishes, the bus drove on into Mukačevo.

Like all Ruthenian towns Mukačevo puts its back against a hill. This height is usually pointed out as the historic Hill of Skulls, where Arpad proclaimed the Magyars a nation.

Its castle, one of a long cordon of fortresses which fortified the valley of the Tisza into ancient Transylvania, figured in the Thököly drama. Here Helena Zrinyi, Emerich Thököly's wife, retired with her two children when Thököly was defeated before Vienna. Helena is a majestic figure, one born to the purple of sorrow. She was the daughter of that Count Zrinyi whose murder by the treachery of Leopold brought on the last struggle for Hungarian independence of Austria. Her first husband and the father of her children was Francis Rakočzy who lost his life in the rebellion aroused by the murder of his father-in-law. Her son, Francis Rakočzy the second, was that last champion against the Hapsburgs, and doomed to defeat at Trenčín. Her married life with Emerich Thököly was broken by wars, imprisonments, treacheries and disasters.

But she was true daughter, wife and mother of soldiers. She held her castle of Mukačevo against Caraffa for two years of siege. When, at last, the Austrian prevailed, Helena was carried prisoner first to Prešov, then to an Ursuline convent in Bratislava. Thence she ultimately escaped to find her husband in Turkey.

Count Renoncourt in his *Memoirs* mentions having seen Emerich Thököly in Adrianople. The hero of Kažmarok was then the mystery man of Europe. The Count relates that "he always went armed to the teeth, and was attended by a young female in men's attire who

had followed him in the wars and had saved his life more than once." Helena or another?

The drawbridge and keep of Helena's fortress remain as impregnable today as when they resisted the terrible Caraffa. The Hungarians used the place as a prison for political prisoners. Here Prince Alexander Ypsilanti, the Greek patriot who fled into Austria after his defeat by the Turks, was shut up for safe-keeping. In the Great War the castle did duty again in housing Russian captives. On the walls of the dungeons and the chapel one may trace names and inscriptions which these last unfortunates carved into the stones.

One looks from the castle ramparts across the town to the north where the hills begin. The great Carpathians roll up in forested waves. A little railway used now for transporting lumber, but during the War one of the main supply roads to Austria's Galician front, wanders up the valley of the Latorča.

It is beautiful, wild country. The forests of beech and oak press close upon the stream with only just room enough for the rails and a wagon road beside the river. These forests are still part of the property of Count Andrassy, a descendant, no doubt, of him whom the White Lady of Levoča loved so unwisely.

The valley twists and winds mounting ever higher. The train moves so slowly that you are tempted to jump out to pick armfuls of the tall blue, fringed gentians, the blue and white Carpathian harebells and the yellow foxgloves that bloom at the edge of the woods. Forgotten are the dust of Užhorod's plain; the heat; the flies; alas! the fleas of the Koruna; the motor bus; the dead cow. The breeze from these cool mountain heights is fresh

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with the sweetness of pines and of the heather that blooms on the alpine meadows above the forests.

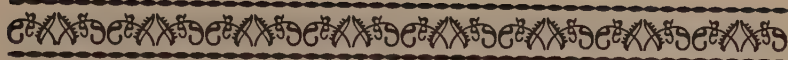
My plan was to go to Volovec, a village on the crest of the Carpathians. The R——s in Banska Bystrica had said of it, "Not to be missed if you want to see a real Ruthenian village."

Beyond Volovec my plans did not go, except that I wished to reach Jasina, a settlement at the eastern tip of Ruthenia, on Sunday in order to see the characteristic dress of the Huculs, a tribe of Ruthenes who live in the upper valley of the Tisza. This was Friday; the hour noon. In the day and a half anything might happen.

I gave myself over to that most luxurious of all the traveller's moods, an attitude of detachment. Let Ruthenia do with me as she would. I was in Ruthenia's hands.

Bring on your adventures.





CHAPTER TWO

SABBATH EVE AND SABBATH DAY



HAT price discomfort is a problem which every traveler must answer for himself. It is conceded that none of us packs luggage, enters into negotiations which steamship companies, passport offices, railroads and customs houses for the sake of searching out living conditions that shall be exactly like those we know as

“home.” Granted, too, Stevenson’s theory that a good holiday has to be worked for. Everyone worthy his place among the sons of Marco Polo is ready to endure some degree of discomfort, dirt and inconvenience for that rewarding glow of discovery which comes of venturing into corners of the world where Messrs. Thomas Cook and Son have not preceded him.

But — and here steps in cool, common-sense — unless a place gives equal return in beauty, in experience, in the understanding of a race or a people, it very decidedly does *not* repay for too heavy an endurance test in the way of improper housing, filth and lack of sanitation.

Volovec lies off the tourist’s map. And rightly so.

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The place has the look of a West African village. Thirty or forty houses built of baked mud with roofs that rise in high, conical peaks and are covered with ragged thatch, eighteen inches thick, cluster in a deep pocket between the hills. The houses are almost indistinguishable from the barns and the straw stacks which jostle them, except that the straw stacks have adjustable roofs which slide up and down four tree trunks arranged in a square. This economy enables the Ruthenian farmer to raise the roof for a good crop and to lower it as the pile diminished toward spring.

The houses have no chimneys. Perhaps one in five has a hole in the peak of the roof covered with a little pent house, through which the smoke curls upwards. For the others, the simpler expedient of letting the smoke find its way out through the door and holes in the walls suffices.

Because it was after the harvest, rows of ears of corn hung from the house eaves drying. Families richer than the rest set up a dead tree beside the house. The branches were cut back to within four or five feet of the trunk and these were hung thickly with the golden ears. Small boys of the family were stationed below, with stones to ward off the ravens which circled, cawing greedily, overhead.

Before the door of one house, the village potter squatted beside his wheel. Rows of bowls and jugs of red clay stood about waiting to be fired. The finished pieces were decorated with intricate geometric designs of white and black on the dark red clay. The effect was strangely oriental, almost Egyptian. One began to understand the boast of Ruthenian potters that they learned their art from Solomon himself.

Though Volovec is about as primitive as a West African village; though the smells and the flies, the geese and the long-haired swine which hung about the door of its inn did not invite one to seek lodging much less food, round about the settlement rose the majesty of the high Carpathians. The smooth-plastered peaks of the Gorgany range, culminating in the Stoh, fifty-five hundred feet high, lift themselves clear of the forests.

On those alpine pastures the heather bloomed rosy red and honey sweet. Great herds of cattle, no bigger than flies they seemed, moved across the high *poloniny*. These herds are the property of the State which has established dairy farms on the alpine meadows of the Carpathians. From far away sounded the long-drawn, mellow note of the herdsman's *fujara*. I had seen one of these horns at Orava made of birch bark and eighteen feet long.

A crude wagon piled with hay came creaking down the road into the settlement. A woman in a long straight garment of white linen with dark embroidery at the shoulders trudged behind it with a young sapling over her shoulders. Where the grade was steep she braked the vehicle by slipping the sapling through the two rear wheels and pulling heavily against it.

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Faced with the facts of Volovec, one understood the statement that the Ruthenes were the only people in Europe whose condition at the outbreak of the War was worse than that of the Slovaks. Hungary, true to her feudal ideals, gave the province no schools, no hospitals, no industries, no roads. The poor soil and primitive methods of agriculture yielded famine as often as any

other crop. Financial affairs were in the hands of the Jews. Drink, malnutrition and tuberculosis worked ravages.

For eleven years, the first responsibility of the Czechoslovak Republic among these of her citizens has been a ministry of service. The Czechoslovak Red Cross maintains clinics, a district nursing service, medical centers and a hospital train. Schools have been built and laws enacted to force parents to send their children to them.

Your true Ruthene, wrapping his long sheepskin coat about him, looks askance at these improvements. He send his children to school? Why should he? Let them stay at home where they are needed to hoe the potatoes which form the family's chief food and to drive away the ravens which threaten the corn. Children are so quick to die, anyway — a little coughing and they are gone — educating them seems a waste of effort.

The Czechs have met this attitude with a solution which, for subtle efficacy, goes far to prove their genius for government. The Ruthenes are drinkers of alcohol. The Jews, who under the old Hungarian régime, were licensed to sell spirits, encouraged their consumption to the extent that farmers often sold their land for one-twentieth of its value to obtain the drink they craved. Now the Czechs demand not only a license to sell, but one to buy alcohol. No man nor woman whose children do not attend school is permitted to buy any drink stronger than beer. The result is that these primitive mountain settlements show a school attendance of nearly one hundred percent. There may be grumbling, but Ruthenia is getting educated in spite of herself.

All these Ruthenian villages have a large percentage of Jews. The Israelites are easily distinguishable from

the Ruthenes in their garments of white linen or sheepskin. The Jews, men and women, are black-clad. The married women are further distinguished by the wigs that they wear. At the time of their marriage their heads are shorn, evidently with the idea of making the woman lovely in no other eyes than those of her husband; the hair is made into a wig and this the wife wears to the day of her death. The men, even when at work in the fields, wear a long black gabardine and a low, broad-brimmed, black hat. The small boys are eerie replicas of their fathers in trailing black gowns and hats many sizes too large for them. Boys and men wear the long curls hanging down each cheek.

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I did not have to sleep that night in Volovec's unsavory inn. Once again Fate intervened; Fate in the guise of a shabby and inconsequential young man who lolled in a battered motor car before Volovec's railroad station, smoking an endless succession of cigarettes and looking up at the mountain peaks and humming softly to himself. I caught him scrutinizing me out of the corner of one eye.

He spoke in Magyar, and when I shook my head, in German: "Would you like to go anywhere?"

One thought of Emily Dickinson's Mighty Merchant, "Brazil? He twirled a button. . . ." Innumerable passes seemed to open in those enfolding hills; a dozen roads led away to a thousand happy havens. One had the impulse to leap into the mud-spattered Skoda, to cry: "Cathay, Kashmir, the Pleasant Isle of Aves!" and, leaning back against the torn cushions, to drive and drive and drive. . . .

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But prudence intervened. I put a cautious question. The nearest place in an easterly direction was, it seemed, Volove.

"And is Volove a better place to spend the night than Volovec?" I asked.

The young man gave me to understand that it was. Infinitely. A wide gesture spoke volumes for the superiority of Volove over that of the settlement about us. He, it devolved, was bound there as soon as the seven o'clock train from Mukačevo arrived. Usually there was a motor bus to take any passengers that train might bring, but the motor bus had broken down on the road that morning and the official duty of meeting the train had been delegated to him.

He threw away his cigarette. "Come with me," he invited. "You can sleep tonight in Volove and tomorrow morning you can drive with me to Chust, which is on the main railway to Jasina."

It was one of three things — the inn at Volovec, the eight o'clock train back to Mukačevo, or the solution he proposed. The inn at Volovec I had inspected; Mukačevo's hotel could be no better than Užhorod's Koruna and was probably worse. In this case, far, far better those evils that we know not of.

I put myself unreservedly in his hands.

After all there were no passengers. The train chugged in, paused, drew a dozen panting breaths preparatory to climbing the last height of the ridge to the frontier station of Poland and went on. The young man regarded it ruefully, shrugged, solaced himself with the thought of the one passenger he had caught, and cranked his engine.

Volovec was left behind.

Austro-Hungarian troops, marching up to defend the Carpathian passes against the Russians, tramped out that road. The ruts of the heavy artillery remain, leading away through the forests, climbing the ridge, dropping down into a still, deep, dark valley, running along the brink of a mountain stream. As most of the roads in the Carpathians follow the course of streams, close to the water line, and as freshets are frequent in the spring, the roadbed is continually being washed away in places. These are mended casually with broken stones. It is not a country recommended to motorists.

There are a few if any settlements in those hills. The Carpathian forests are the home of the bear and the marmot. There in winter wolves hunt down their quarry and leave a trail of blood across the snow.

On the *poloniny*, round about Volovec, the sun had been shining, though the cup of the valley was brimmed with night. Here, in the forest, darkness reigned absolute. Our headlights were two flickering glowworms. The rustle and sough of the pines, the roar of a hidden torrent—in these sounds the forest seemed to protest our entry.

And now qualms assailed me. What did I know of this driver? Had I been a fool to risk life and purse in choosing this way of escape from the discomforts of Volovec's *hostinec*? A wise woman, you will say, would have returned by train to Mukačevo and to its hotel which held no dangers worse than *hmyze*.

All the grim, dark tales I had heard of Ruthenia took form now and came stealing out of the forest—tales of werewolves standing on their hind legs to look in at cottage windows; tales of that most prized of Ruthenian

musical instruments, a flute fashioned from a dead man's shin bone which has uncanny power to charm; tales of the way the Ruthenes have of burning a cat and smearing a pinch of its ashes on a house door which ensures all who dwell therein shall sleep and never wake again. All these dark and sinister things were born of these forests in this lonely, wild, neglected heart of Slavdom.

How far we had driven over that ghost of a road I had no way of knowing — perhaps ten miles. Then of a sudden there was the smell of a settlement. Far ahead a lantern flashed a signal. Our head lights shone upon a woman.

She came running toward us, crying out:

"Alois!"

"Ružena!"

The driver slowed the car and she clambered in beside him. She turned, lifted the lantern to throw its beam across my face: "*Du lieber Gott! Eine Dame.*"

I had put myself unreservedly in Ruthenia's hands. And the hands were Ružena's. Ružena Gareis, that was her name. She and her husband were Moravians. Alois had had a fine job driving an ambulance in Brno. But there had been an accident . . . into Ružena's voice there crept a bitterness.

Alois seemed to slump lower behind the sheltering wheel. "It was the beer," he muttered. "It was Wen-celas Day."

After the accident there had been no job. Alois had invested his all in the battered *Skoda*. It was to him home and lands. It held his wife and himself, and he had nothing more. Like many another adventurer with

a past to forget, he turned his face to the east and had landed three months before in Volove where he and his *Skoda* supplemented the government motor bus in transporting passengers to the railroad at Volovec, or the longer distance to Chust.

"But he makes nothing by it," grumbled Ružena. "Look! Today — one passenger!" She turned to him: "Alois, were there no more?"

I hastened to assure her that there were indeed no others desirous of exchanging the delights of Volovec for those of Volove. She sighed, then brightened. "But tomorrow we have passengers for Chust. Four! With *die Dame* five. *Aie!*" She drew a breath of satisfaction. Alois rolled a cigarette amiably and said nothing.

It was to Ružena I paid the thirty crowns which were the price of my coming from Volovec. It was Ružena who inducted me into Volove's inn. "Be not uneasy," she whispered, as she pushed open the door into the poor little place that it was. "You will not sleep here. For that you will have a fine room. And clean. No *hmyze!* You shall see! But first, supper. . . ." She gave peremptory orders to the inn's proprietor and retired to confer in the passage with the Ruthenian servant maid.

"Good! Good!" she returned to assure me. "All is well. The servant will show you where you are to sleep. In the morning I, myself, will wake you."

She departed. But one felt her directorship in the mutely apologetic way in which the inn keeper brought the platter of greasy stewed pork and potatoes, the bread and the beer, and set these on the bare table before me. Was it at a nod from Ružena that he whisked the platter away to pursue a fearsome looking beetle which scuttled across the board? He squashed it with

a broad thumb and with obvious desire to please. Then he set the platter down again over the spot.

It was Ružena, too, absent but none the less in command, who guided the inn servant and me down the road which is Volove's only thoroughfare. The servant held a candle. Its flame flickered and curtseyed in the night breeze from the surrounding forests and lighted a narrow path over ruts and puddles between houses, which differed, as I then suspected and saw for truth, next morning, in no single detail from those of Volovec. The inn door had shut tightly behind us. Our candle was the only light visible in Volove. So we proceeded down the road. Dogs barked, revealing houses in the blackness; once the lumbering form of a cow moved across our path and stood, lifting her head and staring at the candle with wondering eyes. The servant pushed her, not unkindly.

When the cow moved off, the girl, whose name I learned was Dashutka, took my hand in her free one and made gentle little sounds of reassurance. Then she led me up a sudden, steep bank and round the corner of a house. The side of the house turned to the road was windowless and blank, but a glassed porch ran across the opposite end. There on a bench sat two women. Both were black clad and silent, but one was young with the rich bloom which is the brief heritage of Rachel's daughters, the other old and wrinkled under her rusty wig. On a stool before them stood a ceremonial seven-branched candlestick with tapers alight. A man stood beside the Sabbath lights, book in hand; a tall, cadaverous, bearded man in trailing black gabardine and black skull cap. It was the cantor of Volove's synagogue and my host for that night.

"I was a stranger and ye took me in." I was weary and ye put me to sleep in clean linen and among goose feathers in a box bed in one of the house's three rooms. Another bed filled the opposite corner. "There my daughter and I will sleep," the old woman informed me.

Dashutka made up the bed for me and waited to take away the candle that no labor should defile the hands of these daughters of Israel on the Sabbath Eve. "Rest with God," she said softly and departed. Mother and daughter filed out after her and resumed their places on the bench. Through the door to the porch, which was the room's sole opening for ventilation, I heard the Cantor clear his throat, then the deep rumble of voices intoning the prayer for the Sabbath Eve: "Our God, and God of our fathers, be pleased with our repose. . . . Spread over us the tabernacle of thy peace."

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True to promise, Ružena awakened me. She thrust her head in at the door. "Four o'clock."

A series of groans emanated from the other bed. Two heads were lifted from among the pillows. Neither woman had removed or changed her garment for sleeping and the old woman's wig was sadly awry. The while I dressed, Ružena leaned comfortably against the door watching me, and the mother and daughter sat up in bed equally interested. They exchanged frank comments on the process. "What, did all American women wear this and that?" Dashutka, who appeared suddenly from nowhere with my shoes neatly polished, added a fourth to the admiring spectators of the ritual of the toothbrush.

When I was dressed, I took out the sixteen crowns which were the price of my night's lodging and laid them on the table. The old woman craned her head from the pillows to count the coins which the Law would not allow her to touch until the Sabbath was past.

"It is too much," Ružena whispered, squeezing my arm as she came with me down the bank to the road where Alois and the Skoda were waiting. "But they are Jews . . . robbers. Ah, well! the room is clean. . . ."

I drew in deep breaths of the pure, cool mountain air. How delicious it was after the musty atmosphere of that sleeping room! There was more than a hint of mists in it; long white tendrils curled away from the forests on either side of Volove. The mountains, hemming in the narrow valley in which the village lay itself like some shaggy denizen of the forest—were hidden by that grey cloud.

Though it was not yet half past four, Volove was starting its day. Men and women, Ruthenes in white linen garments and white heelless moccasins, were driving out the herds. Jews black-clad, the older men with prayer shawls about their shoulders, stood at the doors of their cottages. A few had gathered already about the synagogue, an ugly plaster building with two lions of the tribe of Judah painted on its gable. From there they looked superciliously at the Bohemian lion on the post-office and local police station across the road.

Dashutka went into the *hostinec* and reappeared presently with a glass of coffee and a long salted bread twist. I drank the hot liquid and nibbled the bread standing there in the road. It was all the food I was to have until I could open my rucksack in the train and eat some of the biscuits and chocolate I had brought from Košice.



PRIMITIVE METHODS PREVAIL IN RUTHENIA



VOLOVE, HIGH IN THE CARPATHIANS



THE BROZIK'S KITCHEN — ČIČMANY



A FAMILY IN VOLOVE

It was Ružena who installed me in the rear seat of the car, who ordered a gentle-faced Ruthenian woman who hugged to herself a large wooden churn, into the seat beside Alois; who marched into the police station to emerge a moment later with two military policemen and a shifty-eyed little man in civilian clothes. He walked ahead of the others and with his hands held in front of him and his hat resting on them awkwardly. As he climbed into the car I saw that his wrists were manacled.

In obedience to a nod from Ružena the guards seated themselves beside me, the prisoner on the little seat in front of us. Ružena herself squeezed in between the peasant woman and Alois.

“Now,” she said sharply.

Volove, like its twin Volovec, stands at the head of a narrow valley which leads down from the Carpathians to the plain. The distance to Chust at the southern end of that valley is thirty-eight miles. The road, better than that over which we had travelled the night before, followed the curvings of the hills through forests of beech and oak. There were few villages along the way and few travellers. Once we passed a company of pilgrims who had slept in the forest. They were following a youth who bore not a crucifix but a gilded ikon wreathed in evergreen boughs. Each pilgrim carried a sprig of the caraway plant. This is reputed to ward off sickness and disaster. One sees pieces of it tied over the house doors.

Ružena seemed to feel that the success of the trip lay with her. She kept calling my attention to all that we passed — the pilgrims, a herd of long-horned cattle, a settlement of Roumanians — “Just wait and see what they wear on their heads!”

We spun through the settlement. Men and women wore straw hats with tall pointed crowns like those of Chinese coolies. These, in the land of the kerchief, were acclaimed by all members of the party as a sight well worth a traveller's while.

But the prisoner was the real hero of the excursion. I felt a delicacy about asking what his offense had been and what punishment awaited him in Chust. The peasant woman kept turning about to talk with him, then, catching my eye, she would nod significantly, purse her lips and shake her head at the two guards, implying I know not what injustice and sternness of the Law. The guards seemed kindly fellows on the whole. The sergeant, while fondling his revolver, lighted innumerable cigarettes and placed these between the prisoner's lips. Once we stopped at a *hostinec* and Alois ran in for a glass of brandy which the Ruthenian woman begged for the privilege of holding while the man drank.

Up to the moment of our arrival in Chust, I could not feel that this was more than a comedy — a sort of Gilbert and Sullivan second act, and that presently the bulky sergeant with the revolver and Ružena would join hands and lead off in a duet, with the prisoner and the woman with the churn, joining in together in the second verse; and the second guard, Alois and I coming in strong in a chorus of "Whanky; Whanky! Whanky! Whanky! *Whoa!*"

But the sight of the grim jail ended any fancies such as these. The guards became suddenly very official. The sergeant buttoned up his dignity, gave a curt order, and a cringing little man was marched in at a gate between two sentries. A door slammed. . . .

My last view of Ružena was on the station platform

at Chust as the train drew away. She was fingering my bank note and looking after me with responsibility in her eye. She raised her voice to call across the melancholy winding of the guard's horn: "Write us a letter!"

The plain again . . . interminable cornfields and rows of sunflowers forming pickets about them, each plant with its face turned like mine to the east. The Carpathians were only a faint blue smear on the northern horizon. Chust, with its large Jewish population, had been in the throes of the Sabbath, its shops shut tight, its streets — under its high rock castle — deserted. But in the fields the Ruthene peasants were at work. A woman with skirts tied up and bare legs, thin as a crane's, was moving across a bit of freshly ploughed ground sowing the new crop. A herd of buffalo grazed on the thin pasture land.

The railway follows the course of the Tisza. Here the river moved sluggishly between low sandy banks where piles of logs waited for the high water to carry them on. This region is rich in salt. Some of the mines were opened by the Romans. Hungary, owning them for a thousand years, did a thriving trade in the precious mineral. At Sighetul Marmatiei, the line crosses the frontier and runs for a distance through Roumania.

We stopped at this station a long time and a company of dashing Roumanian soldiery in turned-up hats and cascades of cock feathers boarded the train. They looked at passports and occasionally demanded that a piece of luggage be opened. My rucksack was of no interest to them and they waved away my passport, but the elderly gentleman, who shared with me the one second class compartment and whose luggage consisted of six little

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valises such as children carry to school, each one buttoned up in a neat linen cover with a monogram embroidered in red, came in for a share of their attention.

The inspection over, the guards stationed themselves, rifles in hand, on the platforms of the train and we moved off. They amused themselves flattening their noses on the glass of the doors and staring in at us until we passed out of Roumania and back into Czechoslovakia at a point some sixteen miles beyond.

"Some day there will be trouble here," said the elderly gentleman, when he had rebuttoned the last of his valises. "Just as there was, not long ago, at Slovenske Nové Město. There, the railroad is Czechoslovak property, but the station where it stops is in Hungary. Well, the Hungarians arrested one of the railroad officials. They said he was a spy. Benes had some work to get him out again. The diplomatic relations between Czechoslovakia and Hungary are at best rather strained."

"And between Czechoslovakia and Roumania?" I asked.

He shrugged. The gesture was full of significance. "As a state, Roumania is about as stable as . . ." he searched for a simile, "as if it were run by a cinema director."

Certainly this matter of frontiers is the most persistent worry in Central European affairs. When one considers the amount of time, money and diplomatic correspondence these boundaries entail, one wonders why not, soon, a United States of Europe with an International Commerce Commission for the relief of all concerned.

The elderly gentleman was a doctor of chemistry who resided at Rahovo, "for the fishing, which is excellent."



HUCUL WOMEN ON THE BRIDGE AT TASINA



SUNDAY MORNING — TASINA



MARFA MIHALOVNA GOES BATHING IN THE
TISZA

Rahovo guards the entrance to the last and most beautiful of all Ruthenian valleys. There the Black Tisza comes rushing down from the Marmaros Alps to join the White Tisza and, united, to turn a sharp right angle toward the west.

The mountains rise steeply. Corne Hory (Black Mountain) stretches a defensive ridge that is seamed by the passing of glaciers long ago. Above it tower Pop Ivan and the grander Hoverla, the highest peak in Sub-Carpathian Russia — fir forest on beech groves — and above the firs the alpine meadows.

At Rahovo I saw women sitting at their cottage doors, weaving lengths of the beautiful dark purple and red cloth with the threads of silver through it, which forms the Hucul women's skirts. Each house had a long bar hung from the overhanging eaves. On these the wool was spread to dry and bleach. Old women, herding sheep along the banks of the Tisza, twirled their distaffs like Michelangelo's Fates.

This valley is the home of the Huculs, a tribe of Ruthenes who have kept their ancient Russian culture. They are a handsome race — tall, and proud and strong. Marriage outside the tribe is frowned upon. Their center is Jasina, at the head of the valley.

The village — it is far too sprawling to be called a town — lies in a grassy cup. The high hills at the north are the south wall of Poland. The trail leads over them to the frontier eleven miles. . . . Here the Tisza is a mountain brook, dividing the village, then, dropping from this height and gathering the power of a torrent, it hurries on to Roumania, twenty-four miles to the south.

Jasina is the eastern outpost of Czechoslovakia. Not that Jasina knows or cares for politics. Its concern is

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with the urgent necessities — food, shelter, clothing. With short harvest seasons and the long, snow-bound winters; with the few feasts and many fasts that are ushered in by the clanging of the bells in the many-domed wooden church on the hill slope beyond the settlement; with the price of the long-horned cattle and the long-haired pigs, that live companionably with their owners, sharing summer and winter with them on the same terms.

The costume of the Huculs is distinctive. The men wear full linen trousers like those of the Dětvals, and Russian blouses that are embroidered at neck and wrists and shoulders with red and purple wools. The women go clad in long narrow garments of coarse white linen embroidered at neck and shoulders. Over these is worn the divided skirt of red and purple woolen cloth. Dark kerchiefs bind their heads; and men and women alike wear sleeveless jackets of sheepskin, the fleece inside and the outer leather embroidered in wools.

On Sunday the churchyard was thronged with hundreds of Huculs, all dressed in this manner, the children replicas in miniature of their parents. There were far too many to crowd into the old wooden church. Several score stood reverently in the yard and joined fervently in the singing. They chanted as in the Russian church, without accompaniment, and their voices were strangely sweet and true.

On the edge of the crowd half a dozen gypsies loitered, ragged, incredibly dirty, and proudly aloof. They had brought spindles of their own making to sell to the Ruthenes. When Mass was over, the women purchasers gathered around the Romanis, examining the spindles, and bargaining.

Jasina's inn was Jewish. At least, I said to myself, remembering Užhorod and its *hymze*, there will be no pigs. But if Jasina's Koruna did not run to swine it provided an adjacent yard where those driven into town on market days could be displayed to purchasers. The yard stretched on three sides of the inn — the fourth was the hard-packed earth of the village street. It was ten inches deep in liquid dung. The inn, one story high, divided its front between the common room with tables, and a butcher's shop. Between these a long corridor led away through the depth of the house with bedrooms opening from it, and ended abruptly in the morass at the rear.

Inn and yard were wrapped in Sabbath stillness. A heavy, elderly woman her wrinkled face made more tragic by the rusty wig, heaved herself from a chair behind the bar, inspected me, considered my request for a night's entertainment, and led the way down the corridor to a room at the end.

"You can sleep here," she said not unkindly. "After the Sabbath is over you can have food. There is water there."

She indicated a water butt set out in the yard and went back to her Sabbath contemplation.

I took the enamel jug which the room provided along with a tin basin on a chair without a back, ventured out into the mud and returned to wash away some of the dust and grime I had accumulated in nine hours of travel. The solution of how to dispose of the water was solved by throwing it out the window into the surrounding mud!

I now began to regard my store of chocolate, biscuits and the grapes I had bought at the Roumanian rail-

road station as a polar explorer regards his pemmican. Breakfast in Volove was nine hours past; supper in Jasina waited until after the Sabbath — at eight or nine o'clock perhaps. It was now shortly after noon. There was no hope of finding another inn or a shop where food could be bought, for all the shopkeepers in the village were Jews, and were observing the Mosaic Sabbath with tightly barred doors.

Fortunately for me, I had brought some supplies. It was, as it proved, nine o'clock that night before the mistress of the Koruna forsook her corner behind the bar to light a fire. It was close on ten when she came in to me, bringing a tray with two hard-boiled eggs, stone cold; the heel of a loaf of stale rye bread, and a cup of the blackest, bitterest coffee that was ever brewed.

I took the white road winding out of the village past the church. Before me rose the hills. At their foot the Tisza ran under alders and over great grey boulders; it was bridged by a tree trunk. I went down the steep slope and over that primitive bridge to a little space of grass and shade beside a pool. The place was made for bathing. . . .

Presently there came down the hill to join me a small girl. She called in friendly fashion, hung her tattered linen garment on a limb and splashed in beside me. Together we ducked and swam and splattered each other in the cool mountain river. Then, dressed, we sat cozily on the bank conversing. Marfa Mihalovna spoke in Ruthenian, I in English, but we comprehended each other. Indeed, I do not think the child entertained any thought that I could not understand the language she used, nor did she seem distressed by the strange sounds I

uttered. Perhaps she did not expect to understand me. After all, when one finds strange beings bathing in one's river, does one expect that they shall speak as familiars?

The afternoon waned, the sun sank behind the western mountain. A cool freshness filled the valley. The bells in the church above us rang warningly. It was time to go.

Together Marfa Mihalovna and I went carefully across the log. She carried the sunshade proudly, twirling it after the manner of a tight rope dancer. At the top of the path I took it from her. I bent and kissed her. "Good bye, Marfa Mihalovna."

Tears stood in her eyes. Just so perhaps the daughter of Celeus looked on Demeter whom she found in her father's field.

And then, for the first time in these wanderings, I set my face to the west. At the crest of the hill I turned and looked back. Marfa Mihalovna was still standing there in the road looking after me.

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I finished speaking.

The October moon, risen out of the Black Forest, flooded the terrace of The Three Kings. Far below, the Rhine moved, murmuring, and the lights of the slow barges trailed their red and green wakes in the water.

The Artist sighed; "Yaduz . . ."

"Como," the Lily said slowly.

"Roncesvalles . . .," said K—— and shook her head.

And I: "When I go back to Czechoslovakia —"



SOME HINTS FOR TRAVELLERS



CZECHOSLOVAKIA is one of the coming countries of Europe for the English and American traveller. Each year more of these are going to Prague, are venturing eastward across Bohemia and Moravia to Bratislava and so to Vienna; or journeying across Slovakia to Košice and so to

Budapest.

While Czechoslovakia has not the wealth of art treasures that make Italy, France and Spain a Promised Land, it is so rich in local color, so "different," that it must draw those who are sensitive to a living beauty and romance.

In this book I have tried to give a true picture of my own rather vagabond adventures in that hospitable land. Let other travellers be warned that it is possible to travel from Prague to Košice with the same comfort, cleanliness and ease that one meets with anywhere else on the continent. Ruthenia is not for the tourist, yet. But the rest of the republic has excellent hotels, good railway accommodations, fair roads for motoring, and so many resorts that it is possible to stay at one after another of these and make short trips by train, motor, or bus to the villages and valleys in each region.

The Railway Guide issued by the Government, which may be purchased at any railway book stall, gives all time tables for trains and busses. Čedok, the Government Tourist Bureau, maintains offices in the large cities from which tickets and reservations can be ordered even though Czechoslovakia lies beyond the bounds of Thos. Cook and Son.

What About the Language?

The official language of course is Czech. But for all ordinary uses German serves. In many villages and often in the hotels one finds someone who speaks English, but German is practically a necessity. Only once, and that in the railroad station at Mukačevo, did I find it impossible to make myself understood. The baggage master tried Ruthene, Czech, Slovak and Magyar. When none of these was comprehensible to me, he went out and brought in a woman who spoke German and who interpreted for us.

Motor Touring

The ideal way to travel anywhere, of course, but especially in Czechoslovakia, is by motor. This mode of travel takes one into the villages and enables one to see the costumes, and the village life which are so large a part of this country's charm. The Automobile Club of Czechoslovakia has an office in Prague from which maps, suggested tours, and lists of hotels can be procured. Membership in the Automobile Club of America gives one guest privilege in the Czechoslovak organization.

The roads are fair — dirt roads, apt to be dusty in July and August. The distances between the towns are

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short and gasoline and garage service are to be had everywhere except in the very small settlements.

There is no part of the Republic except Ruthenia which the foreign motorist would find difficult, or impassable. Ruthenia is, for the hardy few, a fascinating, primitive mountain region to be added like a falcon's feather to the cap of the indomitable traveller.

In ten days of motoring, one can gain a fair idea of this land. The distance from Cheb on the western border and Jasina at the tip eastern end is less than seven hundred miles.

In any town one can hire a car and driver at the fixed rate of two and a half crowns a kilometer — roughly fifteen cents a mile. I did this many times in order to have the experience of motoring in each section.

Travel Afoot

For the walker, Czechoslovakia offers untold possibilities. The Czech Tourist Club has marked literally hundreds of trails through the Sumava, the Krkonose, the Hruby Jesenik and the Wooded Carpathians. The same helpful organization, membership in which costs less than four dollars, issues maps, guides, all the paraphernalia for walking. There are frequent refuges along the trails where bed and food may be obtained. Membership in this club also gives the privilege of cheaper rates at all hotels and on the railroads.

The few days that I spent afoot showed me how fascinating this mode of travel is in a land where most of the young and middle-aged take their holidays afoot.

Even in Ruthenia there are trails across the mountains into Poland that may be taken by good walkers.



MARKET SCENES IN BANSKA BYSTRICA

What About Expenses?

Living in Czechoslovakia is cheap according to American ideals. The monetary standard is the crown. This is worth approximately three cents. Lodging in good hotels costs from eighteen to twenty-five crowns per day. At the "palace" hotels of the resorts, of course, the rates are higher. Prague, too, is more expensive than the provincial towns. Thirty-five crowns a day will pay for one's meals in the restaurants.

For railroad travel one can secure monthly mileage tickets at reduced rates, though travel by rail, except on the express trains, is amazingly cheap. One can live and travel comfortably on an allowance of thirty-five dollars a week.

Times and Seasons

Much has been said in this book about markets, feasts and pilgrimages. That is because at these occasions one sees the picturesque life of the peasants. Every town has its weekly market day. In addition there are bigger monthly markets and occasional fairs, like that at Radvan. I have been told about a newspaper, published in Moravia, which gives the markets for each month, but though I tried to buy a copy of that paper in nearly every city and at every book stall in that city, I never succeeded.

It is hard to get information about these things. The Czechs simply do not understand why an American wants to see them. They will tell you about the "Bads," about the caves, about the Tatras, about the amazing Shoe Factory of Bata at Zlin, but ask them about their

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folklore and peasant customs and most of them survey you with scorn. It would seem as though to the Czech mind to be a foreign tourist and have a "Sehnsucht" for "Bads" were synonymous.

The wise American traveller hunts down market days like a sleuth. On other days the towns are dull; the peasants are all at work in the fields. On market day each place blooms. Here is a list of "days" in the most interesting section of the country.

Bardiov	Wednesday
Banska Bystrica	Monday
Chust	Tuesday and Thursday
Jasina	Monday
Kežmarok	Monday
Kyjov	Friday
Košice	Thursday
Lucenec	Thursday and Monday
Levoča	Friday
Nitra	Tuesday and Friday
Prešov	Monday and Friday
Ružomberok	Thursday
Spisska Podhradie	Thursday
Trenčín	Tuesday
Uherské Hradiště	Wednesday
Užhorod	Monday and Thursday

The Great Fair at Radvan is held in September. There is a Fair in Kyjov in December; and the greatest of all, the Horse Fair in Uherské Hradiště, comes in the early autumn.

The religious pilgrimages occur usually in July.

Largest of all is the pilgrimage to Velehrad on July fifth. Moravia has another popular shrine at Velka Blatnice. The day for Velka Blatnice is June twenty-ninth, but on the two Sundays before that date, there are lesser wakes at which the beautiful Moravian costumes may be seen. Staré Hory draws pilgrims twice a year, once early in the spring, again on September eighth. The pilgrimage to the Calvary at Prešov takes place on September fourteenth. Pilgrims go, too, to Mariánský vrch near Levoča on July second.

On July sixth, the birthday of Jan Hus, there are ceremonies throughout Bohemia, especially in Husinec and Tabor. These are usually carried on by the Sokols, the national gymnastic union. On the feast of St. Wencelas, September twenty-eighth, there are national celebrations, fairs and processions.

Food and Clothing

Summer in Czechoslovakia is a season of hot, sunny days and deliciously cool nights. Motoring, one needs a light coat and glasses. There is little shade along the roads except in the forests.

The food at the hotels — I except those of the palace variety — is pretty stodgy. A good deal of meat and dumpling and potato and not many green vegetables except the eternal *okurkový салат*, sliced cucumber. The markets are full of tomatoes, but these seldom appear on the tables. Fruit is plentiful. And everywhere the coffee, bread, butter and cold Prague ham are delicious. And the goose!

I hesitate to number the geese I must have consumed in nearly three months, some tough, and many greasy.

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But no dish tasted anywhere eclipses the memory of that roasted gosling that was served up to me by Josef Glasel in his inn at Čičmany. Father Stefen and I picked the bones with epicurean delight.

I would leave my story there.

“ — a good l’envoy, ending in the goose.
Would you desire more? ”





"WE PRAISE OLD TIMES,
BUT WE LIVE IN OUR OWN"

Trenčín Castle



Orava Podzam



POLAND

R. Vistula

R. Dunajec

Ostrava

ILINA

RUŽOMBEROK VYSOKÉ

Martin

Strba

NIZKE TATRY

Bystrica

DETVA

Tisovec

Dobšina

KEŽMAROK

LEVOČA

PREŠOV

BARDIOV

KOŠICE

UZHOROD

MUKÁČEVO

VOLOVE

VOLOVEC

JASINA

CHUST

R. TISZA

olen Castle

UNGARY

ROUMANIA



Houses in the Carpathians near Volovec

